THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2025

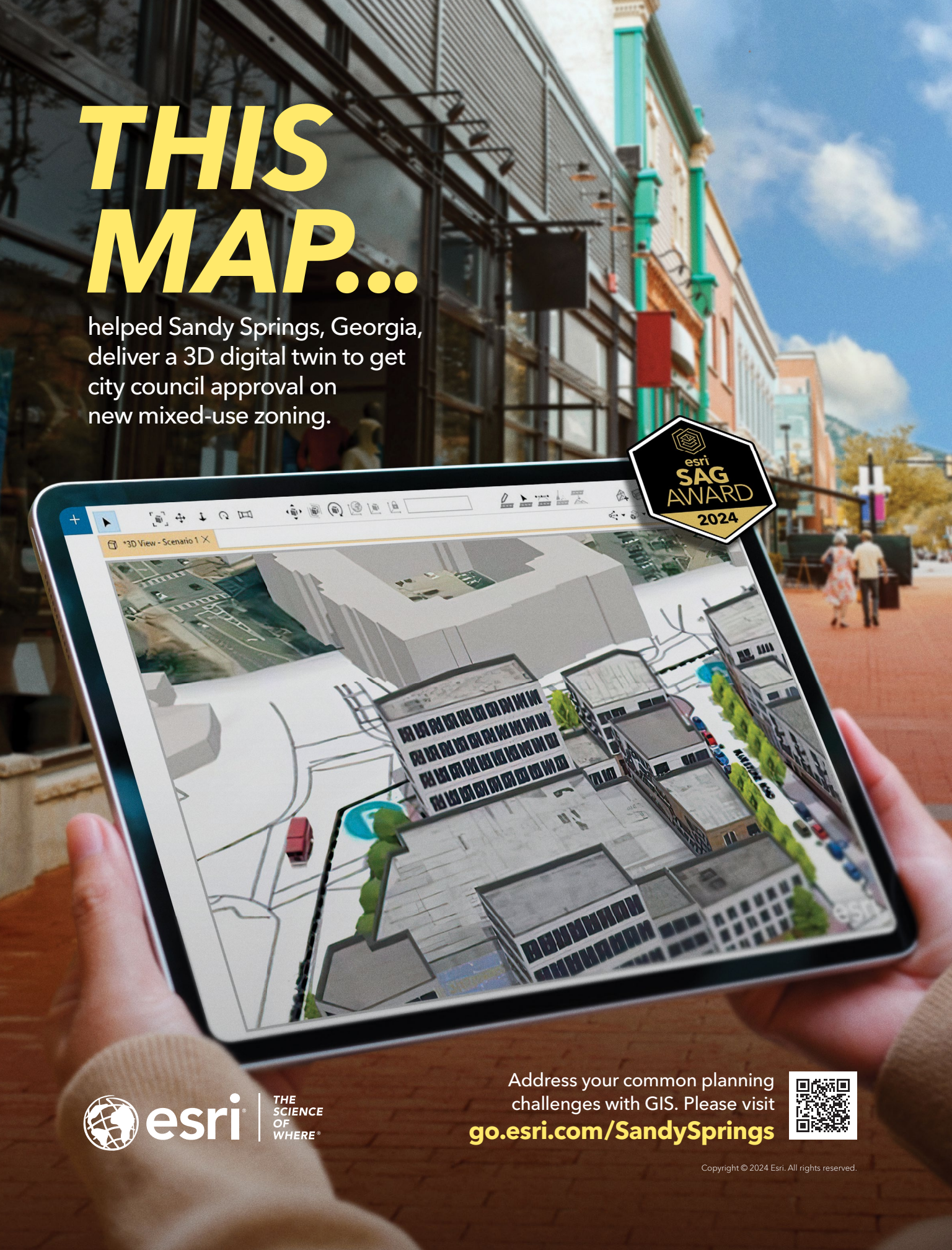
PLANNING

7 NEED-TO-KNOW TRENDS FOR 2025

HIGH-SPEED RAIL HEATS UP

RETHINKING TOD

HOW TO NEGOTIATE A BETTER SALARY



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On the cover: Stopping in at the Miami rail station. From top: Trending needs for public spaces; new stadiums as a driver of downtown economic development.

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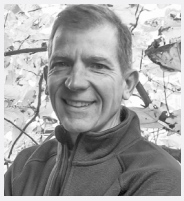

Joe Tedino
A New Game Plan Transforms Nashville's East Bank, page 6

A Chicago-based writer drawn to how planning connects with sustainability, Tedino was struck by the unique way planners gained public input for Nashville's East Bank development plan. "Besides online surveys, they doled out play-money at dozens of meetings to learn exactly what people felt was worth paying for," he says.

Vicki Johnson, AICP
Reconnecting Communities Pilot Shows Progress, page 9

As a transportation planner herself, Johnson finds inspiration in the projects that embrace the vision (and funding) of Reconnecting Communities. "Yes, the work will be expensive, and it will be uncomfortable for some," she says. "But think of the real economic and human benefits we will gain by reimagining infrastructure and how we move and interact in our communities."

Patty Folan
7 Ways to Rethink TOD for Slow-Growth Areas, page 30

As a longtime resident and planner in slow-growth northern cities, Folan has seen the complexities of TOD firsthand. "Transit-oriented development is rarely easy. But don't give up," she says. "The end game—affordability, sustainable development, sense of community—is always worth the effort."

PLANNING

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The American Planning Association will lead the way to equitable, thriving communities by creating unique insights, as well as innovative and practical approaches that enable the planning community to anticipate and successfully adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing world.

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FROM THE DESK OF APA'S EDITOR IN CHIEF

Happy 90th Birthday to *Planning*!

I'LL NEVER FORGET the two monumental stories that defined my first summer at *Planning* magazine. First, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of New London, Connecticut, in its bid to use eminent domain to ease the way for economic development—although it was Susette Kelo and her pink house that captured most of the mainstream media's attention. A month or so later, Hurricane Katrina pummeled the Gulf Coast, unleashing a storm surge that devastated the city's flood protection systems, inundating large swathes of New Orleans and killing more than 1,300 people.

If you've been around for a minute, like me, you know that *Planning* covers stories like these as they happen—and as they evolve over time—to help us all understand what they mean for planners, communities, and the profession.

APA brings community, expertise, innovative tools, and opportunities for professional growth to empower planners to address today's challenges and shape the cities of tomorrow. For 90 years, *Planning* has been a cornerstone of APA's knowledge resources.

Certainly, a lot has changed since that first printing in 1935, when it was the *American Society of Planning Officials Newsletter*, before the merger of APA's predecessor organizations. These days, both the pace of change and the nature of the shifts are dramatic and dizzying. APA and *Planning* help planners not only keep up with it all but stay ahead of it.

The publication also has changed with the times. Our digital magazine puts timely content at your fingertips, while the quarterly print edition lets you browse at your own pace. (If you aren't receiving print but want to, send a note to customerservice@planning.org.) The monthly newsletter highlights the biggest stories, while a bimonthly podcast talks to the people behind the plans. We pay close attention to what you're reading, too, and that data helps us deliver the stories that matter to planners across the breadth of the profession.

Today, *Planning* and APA also have a broader reach. While practicing planners remain our primary audience—you are central to everything we do—public officials, community leaders, allied professionals, urban thinkers, and everyday people are now accessing the magazine to build greater understanding of the issues of the day, as well as delve deeper into other APA resources linked in each article, from PAS Reports to podcasts.

'APA brings community, innovative tools, and opportunities for professional growth to empower planners to address today's challenges and shape the cities of tomorrow. For 90 years, *Planning* has been a cornerstone of APA's knowledge resources.'

—MEGHAN STROMBERG

Looking ahead

As *Planning* celebrates it 90th birthday this year, we have a few exciting things planned. There will be a birthday party (*Planning* editors wouldn't be mad if you brought us cake to celebrate) at NPC25 in Denver.

We're also doing a special spring print issue that explores some of the turning points of planning and looks to what's ahead. Speaking of looking forward, on page 20 in this issue, you'll see a sneak peek of the *2025 Trend Report for Planners*, which identifies the existing, emerging, and potential future trends planners will want to be aware of and understand so you can act, prepare, and learn.

As always, we love to hear from you. Reach out to me anytime at mstromberg@planning.org and tell me what you'd like to see in your APA magazine. Or maybe you have a reflection about how *Planning* has helped you in your career. I'm looking forward to the next part of this journey.

Meghan Stromberg is APA's editor in chief.

When the Tennessee Titans asked for a new stadium, Nashville planners envisioned a bright future for a new neighborhood already on the drawing board.
JESSIE ROGERS/TENNESSEE TITANS

INTERSECTIONS

WHERE PLANNING AND THE WORLD MEET

Economic Development | Equity | People Behind the Plans | Et cetera

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A New Game Plan Transforms Nashville's East Bank

Planners can help cities tie sports venues to urban neighborhoods, creating a cultural hub for the whole city. By Joe Tedino

IN 2022, NASHVILLE planners were well into studying how to turn hundreds of acres of a once-flooded industrial site into a new downtown neighborhood on the east bank of the Cumberland River when the Tennessee Titans called a time-out. Instead of updating its 25-year-old Nissan Stadium, the NFL team approached the city about building a new venue as part of the city's Imagine East Bank development plan. The Nissan Stadium footprint would then revert to the city and could be redeveloped into a park on the river's edge.

The city had been working since late 2020 to create a neighborhood across the river from downtown that would include affordable housing, a multimodal transportation system, cultural attractions, waterfront greenways, and park land—all within some 350 acres dotted with industrial buildings and parking lots.

The city felt it could score big when the Titans' new game plan arrived in March 2022. "The success of the city and team can go hand in hand," says Anna Grider, a senior urban planner and project director of the Imagine East Bank plan. "We have the opportunity to do something very unique, which for us is placing a brand-new stadium within our downtown and building a neighborhood around it."

Nashville's efforts are akin to the Carolina Hurricanes' $1 billion plan to create an entertainment district in Raleigh, North Carolina. The city and the NHL team hope to pair the renovated arena with new apartments, offices, retail shops, and a pedestrian plaza in a mixed-use district. Baseball teams in Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago have used this concept for years, but it's unique for football and hockey teams, as those larger stadiums are typically surrounded by acres of parking lots.

For urban planners navigating the complexities of building or updating professional sports venues, Nashville's playbook shows how thoughtful community engagement and strategic planning can achieve "the greater goal of creating a gift for the city," Grider says.

Reshaping Nashville's East Bank

In April 2023, the city council approved the Titans' plan to build

a new 1.75-million-square-foot domed stadium that would seat about 60,000 fans. The city is now working to build the first 30 acres of the East Bank development plan through an agreement with the Fallon Company, a Boston-based real estate developer, while the Titans build a new stadium set to open in 2027.

The East Bank plan came about in part in response to rezoning requests from separate applicants. Developers sent in plans for about $2.2 billion worth of projects that included everything from an updated truck stop to a mixed-income housing development, as well as the Titans' stadium renovation and Oracle's request to build a modern technology campus for 8,500 employees. This was a wake-up call for the city's planning department, Grider says.

"With those new developments coming, the pressure was there," she says. "We knew that the area floods. We wanted to be able to tackle that comprehensively. We have a history—as many cities do—of trying to get infrastructure and [then] claw things back after the entitlements are already there." Creating a vision for the East Bank enables the city to shape and guide new developments—and build resiliency—so it doesn't become a hodgepodge of one-off projects or create disconnected streets, she adds.

"That flood of 2010 was brutal and is still very fresh in people's memories," Grider says. "Having the opportunity to go from asphalt parking lots to park space and green space—and the ability to manage our stormwater much more effectively—is a great opportunity."

The park replacing the current football stadium will include a district-wide stormwater treatment area. In heavy rain, it will be a floodable landscape. When it's dry, it will be an accessible riverscape that will incorporate piers and overlooks.

The city also hopes to solve a transportation problem that makes the East Bank inaccessible: there is no public thoroughfare running north–south to connect with the many east–west streets. The city hopes to include bus transfers, bike storage, bike repair stations, and grade-separated protected bike lanes on East Bank streets. "This will really help Nashville create a more robust transit, biking, and pedestrian greenway network, particularly in the center of our city," notes Grider.

Below: The East Bank development plan includes new parks, affordable housing, a mobility hub, and potentially a new performing arts center.

Above: The new riverfront East Bank Park will increase flood resiliency, manage stormwater, and support the community recreational needs identified by Nashville residents.

Public input guides the project

Nashville's journey benefited from an "unprecedented level of public, community, and neighborhood engagement," notes city council member Antoinette Lee, who represents the 33rd District, an area where nearly half the residents are people of color. The city held three dozen public events attended by more than 1,000 people and online surveys that drew more than 600 responses. Planners asked a cross-section of residents to provide their thoughts about public space, authenticity to Nashville culture, circulation and mobility, river access, land use, and planning and design principles. The online survey validated the city's assumptions about how residents viewed the East Bank area, calling it an underused space that is inaccessible to the public.

One of the more unique methods to gauge public opinion was the use of "Metro Money," fake bills given to workshop attendees in $1, $5, $10, and $20 increments. Participants distributed their money to fund public amenities they wanted as part of the redevelopment. Nature trails, a marina, and event space topped the list based on the money spent.

The Metro Planning Commission adopted the final vision plan in October 2022. It requires a certain amount of affordable housing, open space, and day care. The agreement also prohibits short-term rentals.

"We are aiming to create a neighborhood that locals are comfortable with and proud of," Grider says.

MAP AND RENDERING SOURCE: IMAGINE EAST BANK

A 21st-century civic hub

Janet Marie Smith, the executive vice president of planning and development for the Los Angeles Dodgers, wants planners to think about sports venues as today's version of the civic center. During a webcast for the APA Urban Design and Preservation Division, Smith highlighted the renovations at Fenway Park in Boston that enabled the stadium and surrounding buildings to be used for concerts, conventions, public voting, and other activities.

Marcel C. Acosta, the executive director of the National Capital Planning Commission and chair of APA's Urban Design and Preservation Division, agrees that opportunities abound for planners to think "beyond the boundaries" of the building when evaluating stadium plans. "Don't just look inside the stadium but look outside of it and look for ways to engage the public on a more day-to-day basis," he says.

In Nashville, the overall goal is to reclaim the banks of the Cumberland River in the heart of downtown and turn it into a thriving, accessible, and diverse neighborhood for all residents. By incorporating a new football stadium into a plan that advances equity and resiliency, the city aims to create an affordable, beautiful, and cohesive neighborhood for people to live, work, and play.

"So that when you come to the East Bank in 10 years or 20 years, you won't know which came first," Grider says. "It all seamlessly fits together."

Joe Tedino is a Chicago-based writer and activist focusing on climate and sustainability.

NELSONNYGAARD/COURTESY CITY OF SEATTLE OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Known as "the scary bridge," this pedestrian crossing over SR-99 is used by elementary school students in Seattle's South Park neighborhood.

EQUITY

Reconnecting Communities Pilot Shows Progress

Demand exceeds supply, as federal grants are funding new projects aimed at undoing decades of harm inflicted by highway infrastructure. By Vicki Johnson

IN 2022, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, created the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP). This $1 billion grant program both redresses the ways past transportation projects have damaged local communities and spurs placemaking by improving the economic vibrancy in those neighborhoods.

"This is the first time ever that a program has been created to acknowledge the harm that was done as a result of transportation infrastructure," says Christopher Coes, U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) acting under secretary of transportation for policy.

In RCP's first year, USDOT awarded $185 million in grant funding to 45 projects. In 2023, RCP—with $3.155 billion from the Inflation Reduction Act's Neighborhood Access and Equity Program—awarded an additional $3.3 billion to 131 projects. "There is a huge appetite for this program," Coes says.

What is RCP's impact two years later? Demand outstrips the supply of available money, and there are success stories across the country with planners at the forefront.

Moving forward in Michigan

In June 2024 construction kicked off in Kalamazoo, Michigan, one of the first recipients of an RCP

capital construction grant in 2022. The $12.27 million grant contributed to a nearly $100 million infrastructure project to reimagine two major east-west thoroughfares, Kalamazoo and Michigan avenues. Originally built as two-way streets in the 1950s, these roadways were converted into one-way corridors in the 1960s, which left residents of the Northside community cut off from downtown. Something needed to change.

First, Kalamazoo officials updated the city's strategic vision and comprehensive plan in 2017, followed by zoning updates "along with developing several neighborhood plans to work on eliminating some of the redlining in our community," says Christina Anderson, AICP, a city planner in Kalamazoo.

Simultaneously, staff began discussions with Michigan's Department of Transportation (MDOT) on the future of these streets, and two years later, MDOT transferred control of Kalamazoo and Michigan avenues to the city. That meant Kalamazoo was fully able to rethink improvements to these longstanding barrier roads.

Retail market analyses indicated that one main issue holding back economic vibrancy in the city's downtown was the existing street network. Store owners and patrons said people didn't feel comfortable walking, or even driving, downtown.

"Ideally, when this is completed, it will serve to reconnect the Northside, an [environmental justice] neighborhood as a result of old redlining practices, to the downtown," says Dennis Randolph, a Kalamazoo traffic engineer. "By converting these one-way streets to two ways, it will make it a lot more friendly for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

"Receiving the RCP funds is truly a validation that we are doing something right," Randolph says. "And we have made [a] significant effort to ensure that this process was responsible and done in a way that benefits all users in our community."

Exploring options in Seattle

RCP grants can also be used in conversations on how transportation infrastructure affects community placemaking.

A five-minute drive is all that separates vehicle access to two north-south corridors—Interstate 5 and State Route 99—that run through Seattle. But for residents of the city's South Park neighborhood, this redundancy has proved anything but convenient.

South Park residents have a vision for their community, and SR-99 is not a part of it. "Reconnect South Park is a totally grassroots effort," says Rico Quirindongo, Seattle's director of planning and community development. "Community leadership went to the state and the city to call for us to look at potential futures for SR-99."

South Park was redlined in the 1930s, and SR-99 construction in the 1950s compounded the harm. With the completion of I-5 in the 1960s, SR-99 was no longer the preferred route, and it continues to negatively impact residents through a disrupted street network, limited crossing opportunities, and noise and air pollution.

"We can't erase or undo the impacts of SR-99," Quirindongo says, "but we can determine what happens next."

State funds have been used to explore four possible options to reimagine the SR-99 corridor: mitigation of adverse impacts, building a tunnel over the corridor, converting the corridor to a boulevard, or removing it entirely. RCP funds totaling $1.6 million will help further refine each possibility, centering the conversation around connectivity, safety, and equity.

"This effort is not just about trying to figure out how to get rid of concrete," Quirindongo says. "It's about fostering the inspiration to imagine a different future than what we have right now."

Right now, Michigan Avenue in Kalamazoo is a wide one-way street. A preliminary proposal (bottom) reimagines it with better lighting, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and street trees.

PHOTO AND RENDERING COURTESY CITY OF KALAMAZOO

Vicki Johnson is a freelance journalist and full-time transportation planner in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

PEOPLE BEHIND THE PLANS

A Planning Tool That Helps Demystify Zoning

SARA C. BRONIN'S sweeping vision gives planners a tool to push for reform.

"Zoning has so many different impacts on the way that we live," says Bronin, founder and director of the National Zoning Atlas.

Launched in 2023, the National Zoning Atlas serves up land use data in a layperson-friendly interface with the goal of democratizing, demystifying, and digitizing the country's more than 30,000 zoning codes. The Atlas helps communities from Connecticut to Montana visualize land use policies and put data behind housing reform efforts.

"We hope that the National Zoning Atlas becomes a tool to help people break through the jargon to understand the power that zoning has on our communities," Bronin says.

On an episode of the *People Behind the Plans* podcast, Bronin joined APA Editor in Chief Meghan Stromberg to discuss the role the National Zoning Atlas is playing in zoning reform efforts around the country and the potential for this data to influence policy changes that impact everything from climate to transit to equity. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

HEAR THE FULL STORY

Scan the QR code below or go to planning.org/podcast to learn more about the National Zoning Atlas in Sara Bronin's episode of *People Behind the Plans*.

Q&A

STROMBERG: The Atlas has its roots in Desegregate Connecticut. How did that state-level initiative inspire a national mapping effort?

BRONIN: The efforts in Connecticut were motivated by land use professionals questioning their role in creating entrenched segregation in our state. If you look at Connecticut cities and towns, income-based and even race- and ethnicity-based segregation is pretty clear, but nobody had done a survey across the state to enable a comparison of all the zoning codes.

Looking back on that atlas, I was surprised to find that 91 percent of the state land allowed single-family housing as a right, and just 2 percent of land allowed housing for three or more families as a right. Those two data points alone painted a powerful story about how local rules added up to something that was hurting our economy, our environmental sustainability, and of course equity.

The Connecticut effort enabled people to see how zoning worked in their towns and calculate the percentage of land that was zoned for single-family housing versus multifamily housing. And that's exactly what you see in the National Zoning Atlas today.

STROMBERG: How can planners use the Atlas to push for state housing reform?

BRONIN: We found that you can use the summaries of the states in ways that are extremely influential on policy. In Connecticut, when we completed the Atlas, we were able to use those summary statistics to catalyze conversations at the state legislature to start the process of updating state zoning laws, including laws on accessory dwelling units and minimum parking requirements.

Meghan Stromberg: How did you become interested in the built environment?

SARA C. BRONIN: I grew up in Houston, which many people say is the largest city in the country without zoning. It does have zoning-like rules, but it developed in a way that is sprawling, somewhat incoherent, and in many places not too beautiful. Going to architecture school and then law school encouraged me to interrogate our built environment, and when you start unraveling that thread, all layers of inquiry lead right back to zoning.

COURTESY SARA C. BRONIN

We also know that the Atlas has been used at the local level in city planning documents, regional analyses, local reforms, and policy analyses. We hope that when planners use the tool, they are delving into all of its features, including minimum lot size, minimum parking requirements, and requirements that housing developments must be connected to transit to inform their decisions.

STROMBERG: How did Montana use a zoning atlas to facilitate reform?
BRONIN: They call it the "Montana miracle" because of the suite of zoning reforms that were made at the state level. The nonpartisan Frontier Institute, which led those conversations, played a big role in developing an atlas for the state's largest cities that informed the debate. The ability to compare one city to the next, said CEO Kendall Cotton, has been instrumental in making change and informing the public about their current zoning and the opportunities to change in the future.

STROMBERG: What's next for the Atlas?
BRONIN: We're already seeing collaborative research projects on a few different big-picture topics where zoning has played or could play a role. One example is the relationship between zoning and sea level rise. We are working with the Regional Plan Association and others to develop an understanding of where in the New York City metro area we are putting housing and correlating that with areas that are likely to flood.

Our geospatial coordinator, Scott Markley, has been generating ideas for additional research. One is zoning in urban heat clusters; another is exploring the relationship between zoning, transportation, and carbon emissions. Zoning has so many different impacts on the way that we live that the possibilities for overlaying our data with other datasets are many.

Meghan Stromberg is APA's editor in chief.

Harold Washington, the first African American mayor of Chicago, is the focus of a documentary chronicling his trailblazing campaign.

BRENT JONES; POSTER: COURTESY PBS

NOW STREAMING

Lessons on Engagement from a Groundbreaking Politician

How public participation helped elect Chicago's first African American mayor 40 years ago. By Ezra Haber Glenn, AICP

AT THE CLOSE of another election cycle, a new documentary looks back four decades to remind viewers of a groundbreaking campaign that changed the face of politics in our cities.

Using archival footage, present-day interviews, and a great period-piece soundtrack, director Joe Winston's *Punch 9 for Harold Washington* transports us back to 1980s Chicago to relive, remember, and reflect on the election of the city's first African American mayor.

The film will be of obvious interest to those studying the history of Chicago or elections generally, but it also includes broader lessons about pluralism and public participation in diverse, often divided communities. Winston's pacing, tone, and level of analysis will make *Punch 9* an enjoyable movie night for planners, too.

The story begins in 1976 with the unexpected death of Mayor Richard J. Daley, who ruled every aspect of life in the city for over 20 years. By the 1980s, in a city with over 1 million Black residents, a change seemed long overdue. The power vacuum left by Daley's death provided an opportunity. After the short term of the city's first female mayor, Jane Byrne, a multipronged effort began to elect then congressman Harold Washington in 1983. He was a seasoned politician with the necessary connections and political acumen.

Hearing the call to service—and seeing the state of his city, which was fractured by segregation, decaying institutions, dilapidated public housing, and declining faith in government and city services—Washington rose to the challenge and mounted a campaign unlike any seen before. It was a new dawn in a city once associated with political corruption and machine rule.

Learn more about screenings and home-viewing availability for *Punch 9 for Harold Washington* at punch9movie.com.

Punch 9 delights in letting Washington speak for himself through footage of speeches as well as short quips and zingers. We come to appreciate both sides of this remarkable man, a calm and well-spoken orator and a plainspoken, often funny observer of politics. He was unafraid to give simple answers and speak truth to power.

The film also serves as an important reminder of previous struggles against police brutality and segregation, issues that have shaped urban politics since the 1920s and will continue to matter until they are truly addressed.

The narrative highlights the effort to confront both the city's established power structure and the pervasive sense of disappointment and apathy in the Black community. The election would be won or lost not through catchy slogans or profound policy proposals but rather through voter registration and turnout.

The election victory provides a high point in the middle of the film; the second half descends into chaos and tragedy. Despite his stunning, well-coordinated upset, Washington's term was undermined by a group of aldermen determined to resist every effort to change the ways of the old guard.

Ezra Haber Glenn, AICP, is Planning's *regular film reviewer. He teaches at MIT's Department of Urban Studies & Planning and writes about cities and film. Follow him at thecityinfilm.org.*

A community open house celebrates a new six-house development in North Omaha, part of a holistic neighborhood revitalization effort. Significant support came from Front Porch Investments, a public-private partnership committed to strengthening the city's housing ecosystem.
BLAKE HARRIS/COURTESY NUVISION CREATIVES LLC

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HOW-TO

A PROVEN SOLUTION TO FUNDING HOUSING SUPPLY

A public-private partnership layers sources to create a revolving loan fund in Omaha. *By Jon DePaolis*

A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL approach does not apply to the challenges around increasing housing supply in the U.S. But while myriad economic, social, and historical factors have helped create this problem, there are replicable, actionable methods planners can apply to alleviate the housing crisis.

Omaha, Nebraska, is an example of a place that's forging public-private partnerships and leveraging multiple layers of funding to both build and preserve affordable housing. A few years ago, research revealed a growing gap in options available to support the metro area's economic growth. In response, and to implement that study's recommendations, Front Porch Investments (FPI) was formed with $36 million in private seed funding to support the metro area's economic growth. Then, in July 2022, Omaha received $112 million in federal money as part of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Two years later, FPI reported raising more than $33 million, including $6.2 million in awards from the fourth cycle of its Development and Preservation (D&P) Fund. The single largest investment of those funds was a $20 million grant to accelerate production and preservation of affordable housing through the city's D&P Fund. FPI followed by matching that amount dollar-for-dollar with some of its seed funding, resulting in a combined total of $40 million. Another layer of funding came later when Omaha received an additional $20 million in Section 108 funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

FPI tries to create new ways to

An affordable multifamily project is under way in Omaha, thanks to FPI's multiple public and private partners.

provide homes for people, particularly through its revolving loan fund, says Jody Holston, FPI's executive director.

"More than 80 percent of funds [were] awarded as either short- or long-term loans and the remaining as grants to address valuation gaps and support planning grants to assess the housing needs of special populations," Holston says.

Both for-profit and nonprofit developers are eligible for the loans, and FPI is especially interested in supporting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and new and emerging developers, as well as others who may face barriers to acquiring traditional capital.

"It also provides financing to preserve and improve the quality of existing affordable rental housing, as well as affordable housing in deteriorating condition or at risk of conversion to market-rate," Holston says.

Predevelopment funding can go toward acquisition, land preparation, and other early project costs to catalyze new projects in the pipeline, she adds.

Real solutions for real places

The Housing Supply Accelerator, a partnership of APA and the National League of Cities, explores both the key drivers of the housing shortage and strategies to increase housing availability. In May, it introduced the *Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook* as a roadmap for navigating challenges in spurring housing development that relies on ideas being applied in real places. Omaha's experience is one of the playbook's case studies.

Developing innovative finance solutions is one way planners, local officials, and others are approaching the housing crisis.

In Omaha, FPI has awarded nearly $40 million since 2022, preserving or catalyzing more than 1,500 affordable units. A sizable portion of this funding will continue to circulate in the community in perpetuity as loans are repaid and new awards are made.

Measures of success will extend beyond the goal of 18,000 additional affordable units by 2030 to include "broader changes in our community that reflect greater cross-sector collaboration and more equitable access to wealth and wealth creation," Holston says.

So far, the funded projects include adaptive reuse of a vacant nursing home as independent senior living; mixed-income, mixed-use developments; and investments in historic properties that had fallen into disrepair. The program has developed open-source architectural designs and worked to increase accessibility to housing resources for non-English speakers. It also provided planning grants to explore the housing needs of special populations such as refugees, adults with developmental disabilities, and mothers experiencing homelessness.

"FPI aims to capitalize the D&P Fund to $200 million in coming years by bringing together funding from the public sector and private sector, including private and corporate philanthropy, and investments from financial institutions and national funding sources in a sustainable model that will grow over time as loans are repaid and recycled," Holston says. As the dollars circulating in the fund increase, the interest earned on the fund will sustain Front Porch's ongoing operations and sustainability."

HOUSING SUPPLY ACCELERATOR PLAYBOOK

To learn about more actionable strategies to increase housing availability, scan the QR code below to go to plnn.org/hsaplbk.

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

TECH

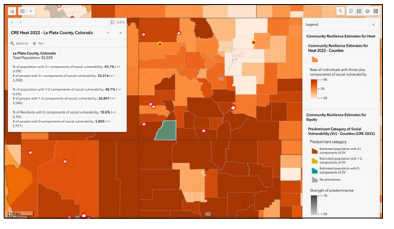
COOL TOOLS TO ASSESS HEAT RISK

APA's Technology Division recommends datasets to visualize extreme heat impacts.

By Sarah Bassett and Mahtot Gebresselassie

THE IMPACT OF extreme heat is intensifying due to climate change and rising temperatures. Heat-related deaths rose by an estimated 117 percent in the U.S. between 1999 and 2023, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Yet many U.S. regions still lack comprehensive heat plans or have yet to integrate heat into planning efforts.

Planners play a key role in addressing these gaps and advancing heat adaptation strategies. Several tools and datasets are emerging with the potential to enable plang ners to analyze and present data on the impacts of extreme heat. Here are a few.

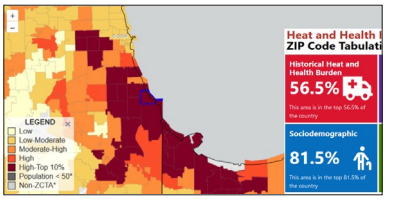


COMMUNITY RESILIENCE ESTIMATES FOR HEAT

DATA | VISUALIZER | ANALYSIS

The U.S. Census Bureau's Community Resilience Estimates (CRE) for Heat is an experimental dataset that measures social vulnerability and exposure to extreme heat at the household level. Developed with Arizona State University Knowledge Exchange for Resilience, it uses census data to assess factors like air conditioning availability and employs small-area modeling techniques. My Community Explorer is a mapping tool that visualizes the CRE for heat vulnerability data at state, county, and community levels. Planners can use these features to develop community needs assessments and vulnerability maps, inform heat-resilient building codes, allocate air conditioning assistance resources, and support data-driven heat action plans and funding applications.

COST: ● Free
RESOURCE FORMATS: Geospatial data, static and interactive map
CODING SKILLS REQUIRED: ● No



CDC HEAT AND HEALTH TRACKER

DATA | VISUALIZER | ANALYSIS | DASHBOARD | AGGREGATOR

The CDC Heat and Health Tracker presents localized information on public health impacts of extreme heat and can help to better allocate resources to prepare for heat events. The tool includes heat burden data (historic heat-related illness, heat-related emergency department visits, and heat-worker health), heat exposure trends, and a spatial

COST: ●FREE ●PAID **CODING SKILLS REQUIRED:** ●YES ●NO

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ILLUSTRATIONS: KATHRYN RATHKE; COURTESY CDC HEAT AND HEALTH TRACKER; CRE FOR HEAT

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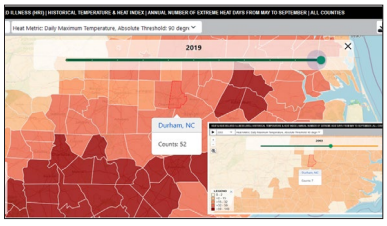
index tool identifying heat effects by ZIP Code Tabulation Area. The HeatRisk dashboard offers real-time risk by zip code and includes heat safety actions. The tool is useful in the development of targeted strategies for locating emergency resources such as cooling centers, prioritizing green infrastructure projects, guiding weatherization programs, and designing heat-resilient transportation networks, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

COST: ● Free
RESOURCE FORMATS: Geospatial data, tabular data, static and interactive map
CODING SKILLS REQUIRED: ● No

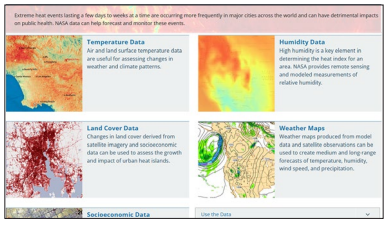


LIHEAP EXTREME HEAT DASHBOARD

DATA | VISUALIZER | DASHBOARD | AGGREGATOR

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Extreme Heat Dashboard can help planners connect extreme heat and energy needs. An interactive map visualizes historic trends of extreme heat days and links counties with data from the CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, U.S. Census Bureau's population facts, and the Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice indices. A dashboard aggregates yearly state and national health impacts and includes tabular data of heat-related deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency room visits. Both resources can inform decisions on energy assistance allocation, cooling center placement, community-driven resilience hub planning, and strategies to improve thermal comfort in vulnerable communities.

COST: ● Free
RESOURCE FORMATS: Geospatial data, tabular data, interactive map
CODING SKILLS REQUIRED: ● No



EXTREME HEAT DATA PATHFINDER

DATA | VISUALIZER | ANALYSIS

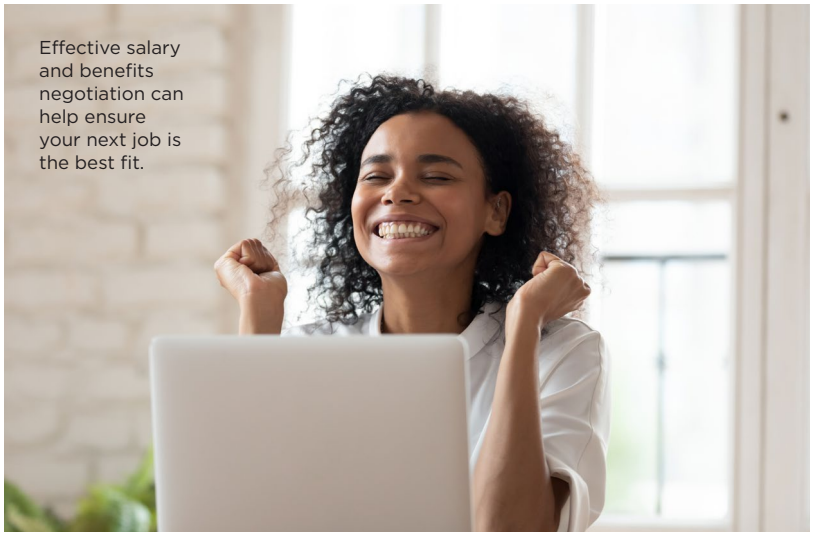
NASA's Extreme Heat Data Pathfinder is a central repository hosting multiple datasets that guide users to relevant near–real-time data for analysis and visualization. Based on NASA's remote sensing capabilities, it provides access to downloadable temperature, humidity, land cover, weather, and socioeconomic data. A forum for users provides interaction with NASA experts and case studies. The tool can help planners and others make data-informed decisions about land use patterns that influence heat vulnerability. The tool is specifically helpful for the development of master plans and plans for land use, hazard mitigation, climate resilience, and sustainability.

COST: ● Free
RESOURCE FORMATS: Geospatial, temporal
CODING SKILLS REQUIRED: ● Yes

Sarah Bassett is a professor of practice in the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University, director of the Resilient Visions CoLab, and secretary of APA's Technology Division. Mahtot Gebresselassie is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University, Canada, and a member of the Technology Division.

COST: ●FREE ●PAID **CODING SKILLS REQUIRED:** ●YES ●NO

COURTESY LIHEAP; NASA'S EXTREME HEAT DATA PATHFINDER



Effective salary and benefits negotiation can help ensure your next job is the best fit.

FIZKES/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

THE PROFESSION

CREATE YOUR DREAM JOB WITH EFFECTIVE NEGOTIATION

How to secure better pay, benefits, and work-life balance. *By Kati Woock*

ONLY 42 PERCENT of young professionals negotiate the pay and benefits in a job offer, but 87 percent of those who negotiate end up making more money. And because gender and racial pay gaps persist, it's even more important that women and people of color negotiate for fair pay. Don't forget you can negotiate benefits like vacation time and professional development, too.

"Make sure you really know your highest priorities when you go into that negotiation room," says Kate Zanon, AICP, general manager of community development for Port Moody in British Columbia, Canada, and vice chair of APA's Women and Planning Division. "Know your own risk tolerance. How badly do you want this job? Are you willing to give up something that's important to you to get it? Or, conversely, are you willing to walk away if you don't get what you're looking for?"

Read on for planner-specific tips for effective salary and benefits negotiation to make sure your next job is the best fit for you.

1 KNOW THE EXPECTATIONS. In the interview, ask about expectations regarding communication, responsibilities, reporting structure, and more. Are you expected to answer emails outside of working hours? What is the policy for remote or hybrid work?

But you shouldn't ask outright if the company allows a flexible work environment, Zanon says. "Instead, you could say, 'Is your work format on a set schedule, or do you have a window of time in the day that I need to accomplish my work?'"

2 RESEARCH SALARY RANGES. Learn the pay structure of the organization or look at those of similar ones. If it's a union position, the collective agreement might be available to you.

Many states require sharing salary ranges when posting open positions. You can also check for comparable listings online based on role, skills, experience, education, and location.

Be aware that there is a growing trend to make it illegal for employers to ask for your salary history. Be prepared to offer a preferred salary range, as this leaves room for negotiation and shows that you are willing to be flexible.

3 LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE. Think beyond salary to total compensation. There might be performance bonuses or reimbursements that add to your take-home pay. Ask how raises are assessed and if there are any caps on annual increases.

"You should also understand the health benefits, the retirement benefits, and any other ancillary benefits, such as vacation time, conferences, professional development, schedule flexibility, or remote work," Zanon says.

Also, think about how the organization will support you in achieving a career milestone, certification, or other professional development. What types of projects will you be working on? Are conference attendance and training compensated?

4 LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE. The poise you display during salary negotiations will demonstrate leadership qualities that will be attractive to the hiring manager. Negotiation is a collaborative conversation for mutual benefit, not a conflict: it's more about how the employers value the work than about you personally. Think of negotiation as determining your long-term career earnings rather than scoring a little extra money now.

And don't fear showing confidence in yourself. "Know your strongest negotiating position before you sign on the dotted line. Don't talk yourself down," Zanon says. "You are their top candidate: don't get lost in percentages. Really understand the bottom line of what the pay will mean for you."

Kati Woock is a freelance editor and writer based in Michigan.

7 Need-to-Know Trends for 2025

A foresight-driven compass for the new year and beyond. *By* JON DEPAOLIS

IN THE IMMORTAL words of Ferris Bueller, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Keep that in mind when you find that your next trip on a long weekend—which could be every weekend as more and more companies move to a four-day work week—will be on a solar-powered plane. Or when you buy your next multitool, which turns out to be made of a plastic that can change its form and properties when it's heated or cooled.

With a world moving faster than even a 24-hour news cycle can handle, it's more important than ever for planners to stay one step ahead of the issues and prepare communities as change occurs.

On January 29, APA will publish the *2025 Trend Report for Planners* in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. APA's Foresight team and the APA Trend Scouting Foresight Community have identified existing, emerging, and potential future trends that planners will want to be aware of and understand so that they can act, prepare, and learn. The report includes about 100 trends and signals, exploring them in future scenarios, deep dives, podcasts, and more. Here are just a few of the trends and signals you need to know about.

The 2025 Trend Report for Planners *was written by Petra Hurtado, PHD, Ievgeniia Dulko; Senna Catenacci; Joseph DeAngelis, AICP; Sagar Shah, PHD, AICP; and Jason Jordan. It was edited by Ann Dillemuth, AICP.*

MARK ULRIKSEN, ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED BY *THE NEW YORKER*; COURTESY GOOGLE

Public Spaces for Shaggy—and Scooby Too

As the need for public "third places" grows, some cities are reimagining how spaces can adapt or where new ones can be created. This includes factoring in places for pets, especially since more U.S. households have pets than children. The global pet industry is expected to reach nearly $500 billion by 2030. Cities can obtain a "pet-friendly" certification to fetch more tourists, and the number of U.S. dog parks is exploding, with a 40 percent increase in public dog park development from 2009 to 2020. In San Francisco, developers are adding dog-specific areas near housing complexes to attract buyers.

Water Is Precious and Under Threat

THE GULF OF MEXICO is the hottest it has been in the modern era, causing rapidly forming storms like hurricanes Helene and Milton this past year that devastated the U.S. East Coast. Meanwhile, temperatures in the Great Barrier Reef are the highest they've been in four centuries, while heat-driven ocean expansion has caused a third of global sea level rise. In the Persian Gulf, water is scarce and valuable, as growing populations and development reach an all-time high. Globally, a quarter of all food crops are threatened by unreliable or highly stressed water supplies. At the same time, water currents in the Arctic and the Atlantic appear to be slowing down, with the potential to change weather patterns and put food-producing regions at risk.

Steam rises from the cooling towers of Google's data center in The Dalles, Oregon.

Meanwhile, large-scale commercial water bottling operations driven by private equity are posing an increasing risk to the stability of local water sources in the U.S., as is the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) data centers that need massive amounts of water for cooling. That is threatening local and regional reservoirs, aquifers, and freshwater sources, and some places are implementing water usage regulations as a response.

EXPERT INSIGHT FROM THE REPORT

'Those rocket designers? They shouldn't be the ones laying out the street grid and thinking about managing the infrastructure on Mars. Planners can really be better—are better—suited to be able to help with that piece.'

—Justin Hollander, PHD, FAICP, author,
The First City on Mars: An Urban Planner's Guide to Settling the Red Planet

The Tampa-based social media agency Brick Media piloted a four-day workweek in 2023 and they aren't going back.

Could We Evolve to a Post-Work World?

THE COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in remote work has blurred the lines of traditional work patterns. Take the growing popularity of "work-cations" and "bleisure," which suggest that work and personal life may increasingly overlap. Not everyone likes it; Australia enacted a "right to disconnect" law for workers in August 2024.

Four-day workweek pilots introduced globally and in the U.S. show that reduced hours can lead to higher productivity and greater life satisfaction. Workers think so, too. About 80 percent said they would be happier and just as productive dropping a day from the traditional schedule, according to the 2024 Work in America study.

At the same time, our relationship with our work is shifting. A 2023 Pew Research Center study uncovered a new trend: only four in 10 U.S. workers see their job as central to their overall identity. This shift is reinforced by the idea of viewing a job as a verb (something you do) rather than a noun (something you are, like an accountant or a technician).

Attitudes toward leisure are changing, too. If individuals use their free time to pursue personal projects or passions, leisure could replace work as a primary focus in life. With the percentage of Americans older than 65 expected to rise to 23 percent by 2025, these current and future retirees also are seeking to make the most of their next chapter in life.

COURTESY BRICK MEDIA

In Florida and elsewhere, owners of manufactured homes often do not—or cannot—get insurance.

CAITLIN OCHS/*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

More Housing Hurdles: Insurance Costs, Climate Impacts, and Population Shifts

POPULATION IS growing much more slowly in the U.S. than in previous decades, and the Census Bureau projects just a 9.7 percent population growth over the next 75 years. The concept of family is changing, too. Single-person households and married couples (including same-sex couples) without children now make up more than half of all U.S. households. Single-parent and multigenerational households also are on the rise, as are roommate situations.

Less than one-fifth of U.S. families now fit the traditional "nuclear family" model, and the typical concepts regarding households continue to evolve. But one thing that has not changed in recent years: finding housing that's affordable is getting more difficult. According to research by Zillow, households need to earn $47,000 more than they did just four years ago to afford a single-family home. Inflation, high interest rates, and the shortage of affordable housing have put the American Dream out of reach for many, with homeownership now almost 50 percent more expensive than renting.

Meanwhile, cities in the Northeast and Midwest are seeing population losses, while states in the South and West continue to gain residents even as climate change impacts are striking those areas the hardest. In fact, the drastic impacts of climate change are threatening the health, safety, and lives of millions of people, with 34 percent of people in the U.S. living in areas at risk of natural disasters and flooding and 41 percent of rental units vulnerable to climate change.

Climate change-related losses are also generating chaos in the insurance market. Insurance providers are raising rates substantially in many areas and have become reluctant or have refused to insure homes in hazardous areas. Big insurers have pulled out of Florida, Louisiana, and California, a state where insurance giant State Farm stopped accepting applications because of "rapidly growing catastrophic exposure."

To mitigate insurance market impacts to homeowners, regulators can employ strategies such as mandating insurance industry transparency and forbidding "bluelining," the increase in premiums or withdrawal of services in high-risk areas by providers. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners recently adopted a National Climate Resilience Strategy for Insurance to guide regulators and providers alike, and Florida has passed several laws aiming to reduce insurance premiums and provide mitigation grants to homeowners and multifamily property owners.

INSIGHT FROM OUR TREND SCOUTS

'If we have very well-defined processes and follow a very scientific approach, we would be replaceable by AI. So I feel the current trend is planners trying to really highlight the humanistic element of their decision-making process, but they don't have the language or theoretical grounding to justify their work.'

—Moozhan Shakeri, founder and co-director, Seal on the Beach

Digital Fatigue (and Pushback) Sets In

Phones remain secure while students are in class.

DIGITAL FATIGUE is real. It is showing up in various ways, from a growing distrust of online news and increasing concerns over AI-generated content to disillusionment with online dating. Schools are banning mobile phones in classrooms, and states are restricting children's access to social apps. The U.S. surgeon general has even suggested that social media platforms should carry warning labels similar to those on cigarettes. In July, the Senate passed the first major internet safety bill for children in two decades.

These measures reflect a broader effort to balance the benefits of technology with the need to be more conscious about the younger generation's well-being. For planners, this trend suggests a greater need to balance digital public engagement with face-to-face interactions, fostering meaningful communication and empathy within communities. This includes creating in-person opportunities to engage younger people in planning processes, which can help connect those generations to their communities and each other.

Pleurotus ostreatus—an oyster mushroom—can eat plastic (and be eaten by humans).

Fungus Is the Future

Pop culture may lead you to think an age of fungi marks the last of us, but the ecological and health benefits of fungi should have more than just "mushroompreneurs" jumping for joy. Fungi can help shift us away from fossil fuels, lower cholesterol, help with successful organ transplants, tackle plastic pollution, eliminate micropollutants from contaminated water, and transition to more sustainable food systems. In 2023, U.S. mushroom sales reached $1.04 billion, and the market is projected to triple in the next 10 years. As planners look for nature-based solutions for urban environments, fungi could become a key partner in creating better living spaces for all.

FROM LEFT: ZACK WITTMAN/*THE NEW YORK TIMES*; SUNGSU HAN/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone tribe member Daranda Hinkey stands near her home on the Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation in Nevada. She and her neighbors are fighting to halt construction of a lithium mine near a sacred site.

RICK BOWMER/AP PHOTO

Balancing Green Energy Demand with Indigenous Rights

AS THE INTEREST for renewable energy has spiked, so has the need for mining the raw minerals and metals required by these technologies—with some estimates believing demand will quadruple by 2040. These include lithium, cobalt, and silicon, as well as over a dozen rare earth elements. But mining comes with myriad human and environmental costs, often occurring in and at the expense of disadvantaged areas. This potentially pits government and private interests against Indigenous peoples, primarily through the extraction and exploitation of resources on tribal lands.

More than half of projects to extract energy transition materials are on or near Indigenous land, and Indigenous peoples are directly impacted by over a third of global environmental conflicts, either through landscape, land, or livelihood loss. Some efforts are underway to boost Indigenous sovereignty.

Central to the issue—and potential solutions—are land use and ownership, as well as the ability to apply different lenses to see the points of view and needs of the people these decisions will affect the most. Protecting the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples could reduce the negative impact of environmental conflicts over the green energy transition and provide solutions. One such way is by adopting Indigenous knowledge into existing approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation, like how several Native American nations are reintroducing bison to the U.S. plains to enhance environmental and socioeconomic outcomes.

Jon DePaolis is APA's senior editor.

Is High-Speed Rail Ready

The planned station in Fresno, California, is viewed as a potential catalyst for economic growth. An elevated pedestrian crossing over the street-level station will reconnect downtown and Chinatown.

RENDERING COURTESY FOSTER+PARTNERS

to Leave the Station?

Despite delays and challenges, several high-profile projects are gaining momentum in California, Texas, and Florida.

By DANIEL VOCK

In roughly four years, trains traveling 218 miles at speeds up to

200 mph through the desert

from Las Vegas will arrive in the Los Angeles suburb of Rancho Cucamonga—a seemingly unlikely destination for the first truly high-speed rail line in North America. But a private railroad called Brightline, which also runs somewhat slower trains between Orlando and Miami in Florida, announced in 2020 that Rancho Cucamonga would be one of its first destinations.

"There is no high-speed rail in the United States for us to really model any of this after," says Matthew Burris, AICP, deputy city manager of the community of 167,000 located in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. "On the one hand, we think that transportation patterns could grow and be more diverse. We're going to have people coming from much farther distances. But we know a big part of Brightline's strategy is relying on high-quality transit that already exists, so the people coming in maybe don't necessarily want to get in a car."

As unexpected as the selection might have been, it proved to fit in with many of the city's initiatives. Rancho Cucamonga's station is the second busiest on the Metrolink commuter rail system serving the Los Angeles region. Brightline's station will be attached to that commuter rail stop, giving people throughout the region access to the Vegas-bound trains. The local transit agency is also developing plans to connect the station to the nearby Ontario International Airport using autonomous, zero-emission vehicles through a four-mile tunnel. Residents will be able to link to the station with a new bus rapid transit line, bike paths, and stops for ride-hailing services.

High-speed rail, though, changes the dynamic of the area. Making it work means borrowing features of airports—like big parking garages and heightened security measures—along with attributes of a traditional rail station, such as easy access to downtown amenities and the potential for nearby development. It's a balancing act that an increasing number of cities are likely to be facing, as several high-speed rail projects get underway across the country.

Below: Brightline West broke ground in 2024 and bills itself as the first "true" high-speed rail in the U.S. The all-electric route starting in Las Vegas will drop riders at a suburban LA station (right) in just over two hours. Bottom right: Construction also has begun on the California High-Speed Rail Authority system, including overpasses like this one in Fresno. To date, 48 structures are complete and 34 more are underway.

California, for example, is building its own high-speed rail line that will start in the Central Valley and eventually connect to the Bay Area. Amtrak is exploring a high-speed connection

RENDERINGS COURTESY BRIGHTLINE; THIS PAGE: COURTESY CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

between Dallas and Houston. And efforts to build high-speed rail in places like Arizona, North Carolina, and the Pacific Northwest are in the early stages of development but could shape the visions communities cast for themselves in the coming decades.

Those efforts will attract both attention and scrutiny, not only for the transportation options they deliver but also how they affect the communities where they're located. "If you're planning to bring high-speed rail to a community, this affects every single person in that community, so you need to do a huge amount of outreach and education and solicit input from a lot of different people," says Philip Mark Plotch, AICP, the principal researcher at the Eno Center for Transportation, a Washington think tank. "If you have a small community, and you're putting 1,000 people an hour onto a train, that's going to affect where people choose to live, where people choose to work, and the way people get to and fro."

Done right, high-speed rail could spark an economic boom, Plotch says. But done poorly, it could exacerbate the problems many communities already face with sprawl and auto dependency.

"To me, sprawl is the antithesis of good planning," Plotch says. "You can build high-speed rail in a way that promotes a packed urban environment, or you can build it in a way that just exacerbates sprawl."

Station design shapes city growth

THE PHYSICAL FORM OF HIGH-SPEED RAIL MAKES IT UNIQUE, EVEN compared to other rail deployments. When speed is key, railroads want to keep stops to a minimum, so stations are few and far apart. Their platforms are longer, to service high-capacity trains. The tracks are different, too. Once trains start getting past 100 mph, grade crossings where rails and roads overlap become impractical and even dangerous. So, high-speed rail systems need viaducts, underpasses, and tunnels to keep trains away from vehicles—and fences to prevent pedestrians from crossing. High-speed trains also need electricity, usually delivered through overhead wires.

The business justification for high-speed rail is also different. Railroads want to connect cities that are too far to drive but too close to fly. Because high-speed rail is competing with flying, rail carriers can charge a premium and prioritize amenities like on-board Wi-Fi, comfy seats, and upscale food options. Often, those new railroads want their stations to cater to high-end customers, too.

Similar needs, though, don't always produce similar solutions. Take California High-Speed Rail, the state-run project to eventually connect Los Angeles and San Francisco. It was the first high-speed rail project in the U.S. to launch, after voters there approved the initial funding for it in a 2008 ballot question. The focus of that effort now is to build a 171-mile segment between Merced and Bakersfield, which will include Central Valley stops in Madera, Fresno, and Kings County.

Margaret "Meg" Cederoth, AICP, the director of planning and sustainability at the California High-Speed Rail Authority, says each of those stations will be tailored to the visions that planners and officials in each of those cities laid out. "As a state, we have these 20- or 40-acre sites in the middle of these places, and the state can do a lot, but [the stations] need to sit within the nest of broader city planning," she says. "Planning dollars can be really scarce, so we recognize that we need to provide either consulting support, in-kind matches, or just direct funding of planning activities."

In the Central Valley, Fresno developed a station-area master plan that by right allows taller, denser, and more compact development in the

area. The city also is looking at the infrastructure it needs to support more people living close to the station. The goal is to make downtown Fresno a regional destination offering conventions, a minor league ballpark, and transit connections to Yosemite National Park.

The station and surrounding development also give the city a chance to address some longstanding problems with existing freight rail lines creating a barrier between Chinatown and downtown, Cederoth says. Fresno officials decided to keep the rail lines at ground level, an option that increases the costs of the project because it requires the state to build underpasses on nearby streets. But city leaders hope the passenger rail station will attract development to both sides of the tracks and help pedestrians get between neighborhoods on a new bridge that people can cross even if they aren't taking the train.

Bakersfield's station, on the other hand, is on the edge of downtown, which allows it to keep its historic city center intact while using the high-speed rail station as a new zone for development, Cederoth says. The city also chose to elevate the tracks into the station, so trains will enter the new structure on a 60-foot-high viaduct. "It gives you the opportunity for the station to be this new, iconic piece of architecture," she says. "It also means that you [can] just go underneath the train. It doesn't create a barrier." Planners like Cederoth want to avoid the destructive neighborhood impacts caused by infrastructure projects of the 20th century.

The high-speed rail authority's current plan is for the Central Valley segment of the new line to open between 2030 and 2033. The route won't include either of the ultimate destinations in San Francisco or LA, but the agency is working to make sure transfers on both ends are smooth. Passengers will be able to take a bus between Bakersfield and LA and a train from Merced to San Jose.

But Cederoth says communities outside of California can learn from the work the Central Valley cities have done to prepare for high-speed rail. "High-speed rail in California is starting in the Central Valley, which, frankly, looks more like America than any other place in the state."

7 WAYS TO RETHINK TOD FOR SLOW-

Consider local markets and nontraditional approaches to make

Planning initiatives are often reinvented—sometimes with new nomenclature—to adapt to current conditions and parameters. That's certainly the case with transit-oriented development (TOD).

While implementing TOD in fast-growing parts of the country like Atlanta and Northern Virginia has seen some success, it can be harder in slow-growth metro regions, including those with an existing low-density urban fabric and a reliance on car commuting.

But, these places still can offer lessons. Planners can lead by rethinking TOD assumptions and carefully considering the realities of local real estate investment, housing needs and supply, and neighborhood form, as well as the appetite for policy changes.

LOOK FOR ARTERIAL ROAD VISIBILITY. Historic development patterns, like those in Pittsburgh, can lead to transit sites that are hidden, which is challenging for retail operators. Businesses could struggle if commuters are their primary customers. If retail is included in the mix, locate it on sites where noncommuters will see it, including along high-visibility or high-traffic roads. This is especially important at stations outside the urban core.

ESTABLISH CONSISTENCY WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD. Most TOD guidelines recommend higher density development adjacent to the station, but that increased density might actually make sense farther from the station core, along or adjacent to an existing commercial corridor. Regardless of the station site location, new development patterns should respect the existing urban fabric.

ASSESS AND FOSTER LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT. New development near a station can take years to implement, so consistent support and leadership are critical. If TOD is feasible in the long term, phased placemaking is an option. If the area is not yet ripe for full-scale development, apply low-cost improvements to enhance publicly owned, station-adjacent land in the interim. For example, if stormwater runoff is an issue near the station, designing

GROWTH AREAS

transit-oriented developments a reality. BY PATTY FOLAN

A pop-up park at The Boro in Tysons, Virginia, brought visibility to that D.C. Metro station. It's a move slower growth areas can inexpensively copy.

COURTESY LANDDESIGN/DENISE RETALLACK

a community gathering space with green infrastructure can provide short-term benefits.

Sometimes, simply increasing awareness of an area is an effective strategy. In Tysons, Virginia, a pop-up park was created at The Boro, a dense, mixed-use community with access to the D.C. Metro. Simple interventions like moveable furniture and a painted parking lot provide a backdrop for community events and live music and reinforce the need and desire for public space.

CONSIDER POP-UPS FOR NOW. Temporary, low-cost structures for retail aimed at transit users, like coffee shops and juice bars, can help activate an area while preserving future flexibility for permanent development near the station.

SEEK PARKING FLEXIBILITY. A key objective of TOD is to reduce car trips, but parking requirements are a common issue that can hold up TOD for years. Because land is often scarce, many communities require structured parking, but that can cost $50,000 or more a space.

If a parking structure is a must, consider ways to shrink its impact and overall footprint. Given limited land availability, a TOD project in Pittsburgh called for a new garage to be built above an existing bus turnaround, which allows for a future shift to first-floor commercial space. As with many TOD recommendations, phasing—and patience—is often key.

Shared parking among uses with different peak times can work in some places. Can parking minimums be reduced or waived altogether? Legislation in some states, including Oregon and California, makes parking optional for locations near high-frequency transit stops.

RECONSIDER ZONING AND OTHER REGULATIONS. If mixed-use development is allowed, is first-floor retail required? Mandated first-floor commercial space can be difficult to implement in mixed-use buildings, and TOD is no different. A carefully considered mix of uses that encourage activity throughout the day and evening should be a strategic focus.

APPROPRIATELY SCALE PUBLIC LAND. Regional agencies may consider leveraging new TOD by putting to use land occupied by existing park-and-ride spaces since this land is already publicly owned. However, one-to-one replacement of these spaces can be cost-prohibitive if it requires the construction of vertical parking.

Pittsburgh Regional Transit has looked at other options for this reason. And a study completed for the BART system in San Francisco reveals that the larger benefits of TOD in terms of potential ground rents and increased ridership should be considered before full replacement of park-and-ride spaces is required.

Development trends continue to evolve, but certain planning initiatives endure. Walkability, a mix of uses, and inclusion of public space all make sense near transit stops. How planners go about implementing TOD might be revisited from time to time, but the general principles have been shown to positively influence important planning goals related to sustainability, inclusion, and sense of community.

Patty Folan is a visiting associate professor at the University of Arkansas, where she teaches landscape architecture and urban planning within the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design.

High-speed rail faces hurdles in Texas

WHILE CONSTRUCTION IN CALIFORNIA IS WELL UNDERWAY, LONG-AWAITED plans to run Japanese-style bullet trains, or Shinkansen, between Houston and Dallas are just inching along. But the project is generating more interest after Amtrak recently took the lead on the effort. It would be the passenger rail carrier's first foray into high-speed rail.

Texas Central, a U.S. company with the backing of the Japanese company that runs Japan's oldest Shinkansen rail routes, proposed a three-stop service in Texas using the iconic trains. The trip—from the Cedars neighborhood south of downtown Dallas to Brazos Valley near Texas A&M University's College Station campus and on to its final stop in northwest Houston—would take less than 90 minutes.

The company raised money, obtained environmental approvals, and acquired close to a third of the pieces of property it needed to build the new route. But then it went quiet. The project appeared abandoned until Amtrak started pushing. President Joe Biden—a well-known fan of passenger rail—reportedly discussed the Texas project with Japan's prime minister in April.

William Fulton, FAICP, an author of the book *The Texas Triangle: An Emerging Power in the Global Economy*, says that type of connection would address one of the longstanding problems with Texas's economy.

"All of the population growth and all of the economic growth in Texas is occurring in that triangle" between Dallas, Houston, and Austin, says Fulton, a professor of practice in urban studies and planning at the University of California San Diego. "But the metros in that area are not well-connected to each other."

High-speed rail could help integrate their economies. "The demand for intercity transportation service is clearly there," he says. "There's an enormous amount of flights and intercity buses among those cities."

Still, Robert McHaney, AICP, chair of APA's Transportation Planning Division and the chief of integrated planning at The Goodman Corporation, says high-speed rail faces unique challenges in Texas.

"We have a culture in Texas where you want to park your horse up next to the bar," he says. People are less willing to walk or find other modes of transportation from a train station to their ultimate destination, especially when they could drive instead. And Texas cities are more spread out than legacy cities in the Northeast and often have several job centers. It may also be difficult for a railroad to acquire all of the land it needs, especially in rural areas where residents won't see much benefit from having a closed corridor running through their land.

"We have a very robust, strong roadway network," McHaney says.

TOP: RENDERING COURTESY FOSTER + PARTNERS; TEXAS CENTRAL

Pros and cons to Florida's private system

A MAJOR TURNING POINT IN THE ROLLOUT OF HIGH-QUALITY PASSENGER rail in the U.S. came when Brightline introduced luxury service linking major Florida cities. The service started in South Florida in 2017 and expanded to Orlando in 2023; Brightline had access to existing downtown stations in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and West Palm Beach.

When Brightline expanded to Orlando's airport, it did so with generous help from the government. It runs its trains from the Atlantic Coast to Orlando on highway right-of-way owned by the state. And the terminal at the airport was built with taxpayer funds.

The introduction of trains that can reach up to 125 mph galvanized rail advocates in Florida, especially after former governor Rick Scott rejected money from the federal government to build a passenger line between Orlando and Tampa. Now, leaders in the Tampa Bay area want to get connected to the Brightline service, but making their case is complicated by the fact that Brightline is a private company. (Brightline did not respond to inquiries from *Planning*.)

"My sense is [Brightline is] very supportive

Left: Designs for the proposed Bakersfield station, the southern terminus of California High-Speed Rail's initial Central Valley segment, include a linear park. Far left: Texas Central and Amtrak hope to build high-speed rail in the Lone Star state that is modeled in part on the Japanese Shinkansen train line.

The arrival of the Brightline to places like West Palm Beach (above) galvanized rail advocates in Florida, with Pinellas County pushing hard to bring trains to Tampa.

COURTESY BRIGHTLINE

of intense development around the station areas, and that's a local government decision to do that," says Whit Blanton, FAICP, the executive director of Forward Pinellas and president of the Florida Chapter of APA. "It's a partnership. They're providing the train service [and] the catalyst, and what local governments are doing along the line is they are changing their comprehensive plans, their land development codes, and their regulations to enable that. It's not just the buildings coming out of the ground. It's also about first-mile and last-mile connectivity, the accessibility, the parking strategies—all of it."

The impact of high-speed rail extends far beyond the station. Pinellas County, which is across the bay from Tampa, is pushing hard for Brightline to bring its trains to the city. "Pinellas leaders acknowledge and recognize that getting Brightline to Tampa is absolutely essential because if it doesn't get to Tampa, it doesn't get to Pinellas County in any shape or form," Blanton says.

That said, Brightline can drive a tough bargain. Its terms, in fact, proved to be too demanding for the city of Stuart on the Treasure Coast, 100 miles north of Miami. City commissioners voted in September to rescind agreements with Brightline to build a station there. One of the commissioners called the city's agreement with the railroad a "bad deal for taxpayers" because it required the city to cover the cost of building the new station.

Transportation game-changer

IN RANCHO CUCAMONGA, BURRIS AND ASSISTANT City Manager Elisa Cox are hopeful that Brightline's new high-speed trains will be making regular trips—18 a day in each direction—by the beginning of the 2028 Olympics in LA. And they think residents are warming up to the concept.

"We have residents who still remember before we were incorporated," Cox says. "They remember the days where we were all grapevines and citrus fields. We're going to get those calls and those comments about how long it takes to get across town. But now, overwhelmingly, our community is really excited about Brightline coming in."

Cox is fully on board with expanding high-speed rail in the U.S.

"This is such a great mode of transportation," Cox says. "It's [been] proven in so many other countries and continents. And, you know, with a country as vast as ours, having that ability to move across the country in another way that is expedient like this is game-changing."

Daniel C. Vock is a freelance reporter who primarily covers state and local government.

TOM LEE PARK

Memphis, Tennessee

A ONCE CUT-OFF, POST-INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE—and literal dump—is now a welcoming space beckoning Memphians back to the Mississippi River. The 31-acre Tom Lee Park, named after a Black river worker who saved 32 people from a sinking ship, acknowledges the racist legacies from the city's past and invites open conversations about a more inclusive future. Informed by robust community engagement, the design team of Studio Gang, SCAPE, and others interweaves a river-themed playground, 71,000-square-foot lawn area, pollinator lab, performance space, and quiet contemplative spots with ecosystem restoration: replenished soil systems, more than 1,000 new trees, and native plants that support biodiversity and adaptation to a hotter, wetter environment.

Sculpted topography frames the riverfront, while 32 functional basalt sculptures and a towering sculpture of hero Tom Lee (not shown) comprise artist Theaster Gates's *Monument to Listening*. (Got a climate win-win that makes your Community Green? Tell us about it: email mstromberg@planning.org.)

SCAPE/JOHN DONNELLY

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