There's A New World To Explore Along The URBAN FRONTIER

"We can have neighborhoods that nourish much of their own food by recycling streets into gardens and reusing organic wastes to soil productively for food and fiber. We can restructure our housing and transportation to reduce the need for fossil fuels by 90 percent."

—Sim Van der Ryn, California State Architect

by Gar Smith

Thirty years ago there was a "back to the land" movement in America as people fled to the pastoral comforts of the suburbs. But by the 1960s the idyllic image had been shattered and backyard barbecues became just one more source of air pollution. Today America's sprawling metropolitan civilization, with the East's major urban centers already beginning to self-destruct. In California, however, history is turning in another direction.

A guiding force behind the West's new urban designs is California State Architect Sim Van der Ryn. A one-time UC-architecture professor who liked to pack his students off into the woods on spontaneous encampments to become "outlaw builders," Van der Ryn has become a visionary state official. Like his boss Jerry Brown, Van der Ryn can comfortably drop a Zen verse into the midst of a high-falutin' technical discussion, and like the governor, Van der Ryn has ideals but no illusions.

"For the first time in several generations," the state architect recently observed, "the culture has no powerful shared image of the future. Materialism and technology do not offer a vision. "What we need," Van der Ryn argues, "is a lens to focus what we know in order to create some working examples which in their fully developed form can be models of such mythic and logical elegance that they will replicate themselves."

If it's a lens that's needed, the Bay Area provides a major focal point for viewing the transformation of urban life. The integrative Urban House at 1516 Fifth Street in Berkeley was conceived by the Bay Area Housing Institute to continue to serve as a working example of solar-powered, energy-conserving self-sufficiency. Elsewhere around the Bay, cities and groups of urban activists alike are turning abandoned lots into flowering gardens and inventoried technologies. And increasingly, truck stores, farmers' markets, and food cooperatives are getting chemical-free produce from surrounding farms to consumers.

And home gardening, too, is on the increase.

According to syndicated columnist Sylvia Potter, if you are not now tending a garden of some sort, you are in the minority! Community gardens are now organized and producing in towns from Santa Cruz to Santa Rosa (see Resource List).

With news accounts of pesticides in produce, sand-filled "filter" breads and new plans to permit cement dust as an additive in cattle feed, there are more reasons than ever to consider growing at least some of your own food. And it's economical — according to the New York Times a family of four can save more than $300 a year raising its own vegetables. This week the Barb takes a

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Feeding the chickens down on the farm -- at 46th & Harrison, Berkeley

Gardeners' Group Takes Root

Community gardeners throughout California met this past January to form the first state-wide community gardening organization. The nonprofit California Council for Community Gardening (CCCC) will serve "as a coordinating and networking agency for participating organizations," according to an announcement in the Berkeley Ecology Center Newsletter. The Office of Appropriate Technology has given its support to the Council. Eight committees have been created to handle education, resource exchange, social services, legislation action, publicity relations, publications, research and ways and means.

Bay Area activists are well-represented on this first Council Board of Directors. They include: Mark Maloney of Walnut Creek's Eco-Homes, Bruce Halblance of the Organic Farmers of Berkeley, Art Carranza of the Council on Aging in Santa Clara County, Charles Wilson of the "Black Forty Acres," in East Palo Alto, and Beverly Rudolph, an urban agricultural designer from Los Allos Hills.

John Dolter, community garden builder for San Jose's Parks and Recreation Department, was appointed executive secretary of CCCC. For further information write to the Berkeley Ecology Center Newsletter, or call John Dolter at (415) 277-4661.

You're wasting money if you don't shop at
by Bill Wallace

In an imaginative effort to merge the urban renewal programs of the Sixties with the current race for rap and new social-"back to the city" movement, the City of Oakland and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have teamed up to create the first urban homesteading program in California.

The program, which was created in 1975, allows families to take possession of run-down and abandoned homes for a nominal $1 fee plus closing costs. The only condition is that the homesteads rehabilitate the home in accordance with city health and safety codes and live in it for at least five years.

The program was patterned on the rural homesteading programs of the Old West, under which thousands of farmers moved into government-owned land and were given the property by virtue of having lived on and developed it. Here's how the Oakland program works: eligible families sign up for the program when a house becomes available through HUD's program, those prospective homesteaders interested in it are allowed to examine it. If they decide they like the home, they put in an application and the house is sold by lottery. To be eligible for the program, the head of the family must be eighteen years of age or older, a U.S. citizen or resident alien, and able to pay the rehabilitation costs on the property. In addition, the applicant must not be an employee of the city of Oakland and must own no other real property.

The houses eligible for homesteading are mostly located in East Oakland, in the heart of the city bounded on the North by 35th Avenue and Durant Avenue, and on the East and West by San Leandro Avenue and MacArthur Boulevard. As anyone who has driven through that area knows, HUD owns a vast amount of run-down, semi-occupied housing there: hundreds of homes occupied by the government during the urban renewal effort of the 1960s still boarded up in various districts. The homes have a cold, eerie, almost eerie sound — though many need extensive renovation and those urban homesteaders who have participated in the program so far seem pleased with the results.

Urban Gardening

Organic Farmers of Berkeley

"Most of us are urban people who dream of being farmers," says Kathy, her red hair flying as she shoulders a flat filled with soil. Kathy and Harvey are two of nine CETAs employees working to transform a former steel-mill site in West Berkeley into an eight acre non-profit community farm. The property, located adjacent to the Berkeley Youth Hostel at Fourth and Harrison, is leased from the University of California for a token $1 a month. Even with a growing population of chickens, geese and rabbits, however, the "farm" is still in its infancy as "hard-scrabble.

"We'll save the willows and the scotch broom," Harvey says, gesturing north toward a small stretch of bare ground, "but the rest of it, Corinne, Corinnes Creek connected over average 25-30% below the supermodest, the staff will nearly double.

It's not all peaches and cream, however. Farmers from Tom's cost twice what they were going for at the Co-op. Sic Semper Utopia.

Integral Neighborhoods

"The magic of dreams is that they move us but seldom take their whole form in reality. What do they do is to time them to the moment when the dreamer is rethinking the ideas of Van der Ryn in the forward 1973 book "Responsive Environments."

The Institute opened the Integral Urban House in West Berkeley as an all-female cohabitation (the kind that you didn't have to be a drumer to live in "an ungendered" manner in the city. Since opened, 20,000 visitors have walked through the two-story house, learning how to use the sun's heat, how to recycle waste, how to raise fish, chickens, vegetables and flowers in one well-planned backyard. Now, the plan is to take the demonstration up quantum leap. "We are calling," says David Munnick, "for neighborhood development with an integral systems approach."

On March 7, 1978, presenting the Integral Neighborhood Project, made a dramatic offer to the Berkeley City Council. He, "Like-minded neighborhoods, with a first, the world's first compost-powered hot tub!"

Tom's Market

"Who are people shopping here?" The manager of Tom's Market, an open-air truck stop at the corner of Grove and Dwight Way in Berkeley, wonders if customers come to buy "a winter storm drops from overhead and the prices," he says. "They wish for the vegetables. They cost $1.89 in the supermarket. Here they're only $1.05."

Why are prices so cheap? The farmer who, heimlichly behind the plywood counter at Tom's Market of the farmers, too. There first of all are the occasional windfalls from "produce bootleggers" who show up with loads of peaches or cherries, and then there's the incredibly low cost of land. Only on overhead," he says, grinning in the corner of the dairy cold, "is the open sky.

In the cold, the produce market is one of the oldest in Berkeley and it has not seen business in years to remain open all year. Originally commissioned as "Joan's Movable Feast" it was sold two years ago to Tom and friends.

During the winter a staff of nine work the shop, which is open for the winter season "when prices, will
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1978

** Special Test Market Mail Order Offer **

by Jayson Q. Wechter

I would be something to tell his highness to take it home, the woman on the sidewalk thought. Even in San Francisco, you don't usually see this sort of thing. "Now on Franklin Street, while I was coming back from the market." Stern told the Barb. "I thought there was this man climbing up a wall. Right in front of Straight, like a human fly!" He wasn't quite sure he meant that, though.

Barb was a city-bounding roof climbers who scramble up urban edifices because there just aren't any other places to do it. They practice the complex, often accidents-ridden craft, using to scale thousand-foot moun-

aments in the way they would supermarkets, office buildings and assures identes in the Bay Area.

Not a pastime is an one old, going back at least to the turn of the century, when Jeffrey Win-

three students at Jefferds College at

I'm most famous mountaineer, wrote two underground pam-

an, and Roof Climbing and a Climber's Guide to Trin,-

Thirty years later, lads at Cambridge followed in his foot-

steps, scaling the Gothic ivy-

covers towers of academia in the dead of night, since detection usually resulted in being "kent down" or expelled. Their exploits produced another volume: The Night Climbers of Cam-

bridge, which inspired students at Stanford and UC Berkeley, to scale buildings there for a decade later. Nick Clinch, executive director of the Sierra Club Foundation and a member of Stanford's Alpine Club in the early Fifties, can recall night-

time assaults on the campus and other buildings, with teams of climbers sneaking through steam tunnels to paint detection by police patrols.

Another author, and a photographer, Galen Rowell is credited with climbing the peaks at UC Berkeley, although he denies the fact. The UC standard, titanium, leather and Alpine Theatre were frequent targets of builders in the late Fifties, he said, and recalls one time when one -- not him -- did climb out on the impatiently perched state of Mickey Mouse on its clockface. True, it's builder's interest in pranks, however. They were dedicated, with almost a Zen-like devotion, to the exciting, rigorous mixture of climbing and perversity. Vandalism, as all builders have been scaling rocks for years in a place called from Chico, which eschews all artificial aids (the safety rope) for the risky, relying entirely on the climber's strength and stamina to take him where he wants to go. Nearly every day on the Berkeley

and Stanford campuses and even in downtown San Francisco, climbers are scrambling up, down and sideways on surfaces that seem to offer hard y a fingerhold. Yet they manage to climb -- precariously it seems -- with their limbs crooked, wobbled and contorted, as if faces cast in profound concentration, entirely oblivious to the urban hustle 10 or 20 feet below. Typically, rather than look off to the side, his is his chief concern, and they constantly seek new "problems as these ascents are called -- to challenge their ingenuity. At Stanford University, these generally take the form of long, often difficult transverse on the roughly hewn stone of the building. The routes bear names like "Finger Fryer," "Hootsucker," and "Stairway to Heaven," and many a surprised student exits a door-

way to find a builder lurched on the wall just a few feet above.

The Stanford Alpine Club, which once published a guide to such ascents in the 1930s, seemed dormant since the early Seventies.

There's a sense of beauty to holding your own life in your hands."

"I've worked very hard and very little exercise, and simply decided to start climbing buildings," said one afternoon just before his daily workout, on the walls.

"The challenge in this comes in two things, I think," Collins explains. "Figuring out how and how to move, and in being able to make that more. I've got to know where to move my feel, and I've got to do it smoothly. Rhythm is all important."