

HAWAI'I PLANNING



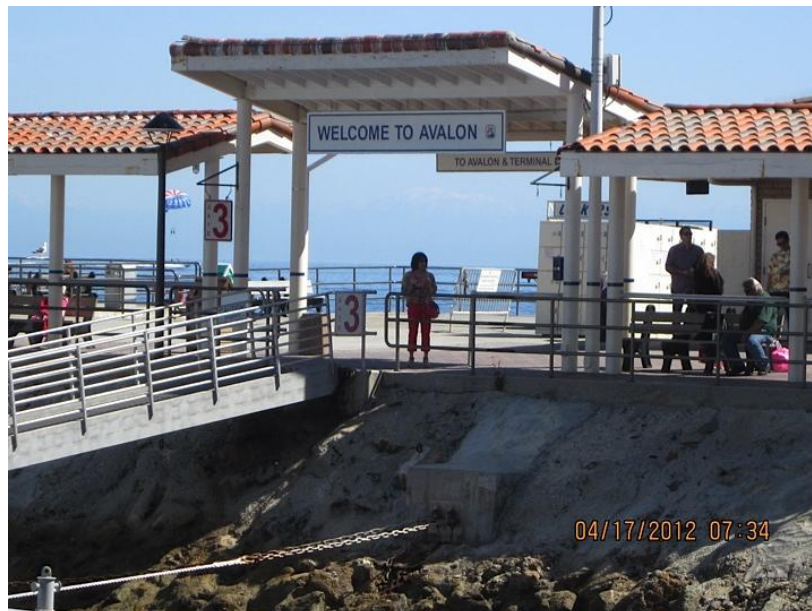
American Planning Association
Hawaii Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

A Publication of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Planning Association

26 Miles Across the Sea...

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On Tuesday, April 17, Ralph Portmore and I participated in a unique all-day mobile workshop at the APA Conference in Los Angeles, which took us to Catalina Island. The island is 22 miles (not 26 miles, Four Preps 1958 hit notwithstanding, I guess that dates me!) off the coast of Southern California. Catalina is accessible by ferry from San Pedro, Long Beach, Newport Beach and Dana Point in Southern California. Our ferry ride from Long Beach took a little over an hour on choppy seas. Upon arrival we were greeted by a playful school of dolphins and otters. Catalina has 76 square miles, is 22 miles long and 8 miles wide. Its climate is fairly dry with 12-16 inches of annual rainfall. Temperatures in Catalina range from highs in the 60's and 70's with lows in the 50's. Water temperature is always between these norms.



Ferry Harbor in Avalon

William Wrigley, the gum magnate and owner of the Chicago Cubs, purchased Catalina Island in 1919. The Chicago Cubs used the island for spring training from 1921 to 1951. Ronald Reagan was at one time the team announcer and persuaded his boss to let him accompany the team. He visited, took a screen test and the rest is movie history!

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In 1975, the Catalina Conservancy received fee simple title to 88% (about 44,000 acres) of the island's land from William Wrigley. They conduct aggressive programs to preserve, protect and nurture the island's 50+ endemic species that include several varieties of cactus, the Catalina fox, the bald eagle and the ground owl. Fourteen bison were introduced in 1924 for the filming of Zane Gray's "The Vanishing American". These bison were left on the island where they multiplied and have become one of the island's affectionate icons. Today's bison count is about 150. The Conservancy receives about \$1 million income from telecommunications tenants and has an annual budget of \$12 million

The Catalina Planning Director Amanda Cook has a staff of two, including herself. The island has a population of 4,000 residents and an average influx of 12,000 visitors per day. There are two settlements on the island, Two Harbors and The City of Avalon. Two Harbors is the less settled of the cities and is favored by yachters and campers. Most visitors go to Avalon, which is the recreational center of the island with shopping, restaurants and hotels as well as many establishments catering to a wide range of land, and water based recreational activities. Tourism is by far the island's major economy; there is a very small fishing industry. Ground water supply is limited and so the island developed a reverse osmosis desalination plant, which produces 250,000 gallons per day. Toilets are serviced by seawater. The simple addition of a bedroom requires obtaining a water allocation. The town has just one K-12 public school with about fifty students. Avalon is truly a walkable community. The primary mode of transportation is the golf cart, which is limited to one per house lot. There is a 16-year waiting list for cart permits. Segways are just beginning to be used.



View of Avalon from Waterfront Park

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The Iconic Casino in Avalon

Median income is about \$46,000. Median cost for a small house (2BR, 1B) is about \$5-600,000. Due to limited land area, typical lot sizes are 25' x 40' and are able to sustain only a modest cottage. Due to this severe shortage of housing, some employers have actually bought homes to house their employees, as this is the only way to attract the needed workforce to support the tourist economy.



Mixed-Use Birdhouse Neighborhood

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The island's most notable landmark is the Casino, which was built in 1929. It has never permitted gambling and derives its name from the Italian language and means the gathering place. Over the years it has functioned as a grand ballroom for many affairs. It presently functions as a museum with several galleries and a gift shop. The visit was truly a glimpse of a unique place which is rich in history and natural resources and which has attractions for many. It is also unique in the sense of its planning problems because of its isolated location.



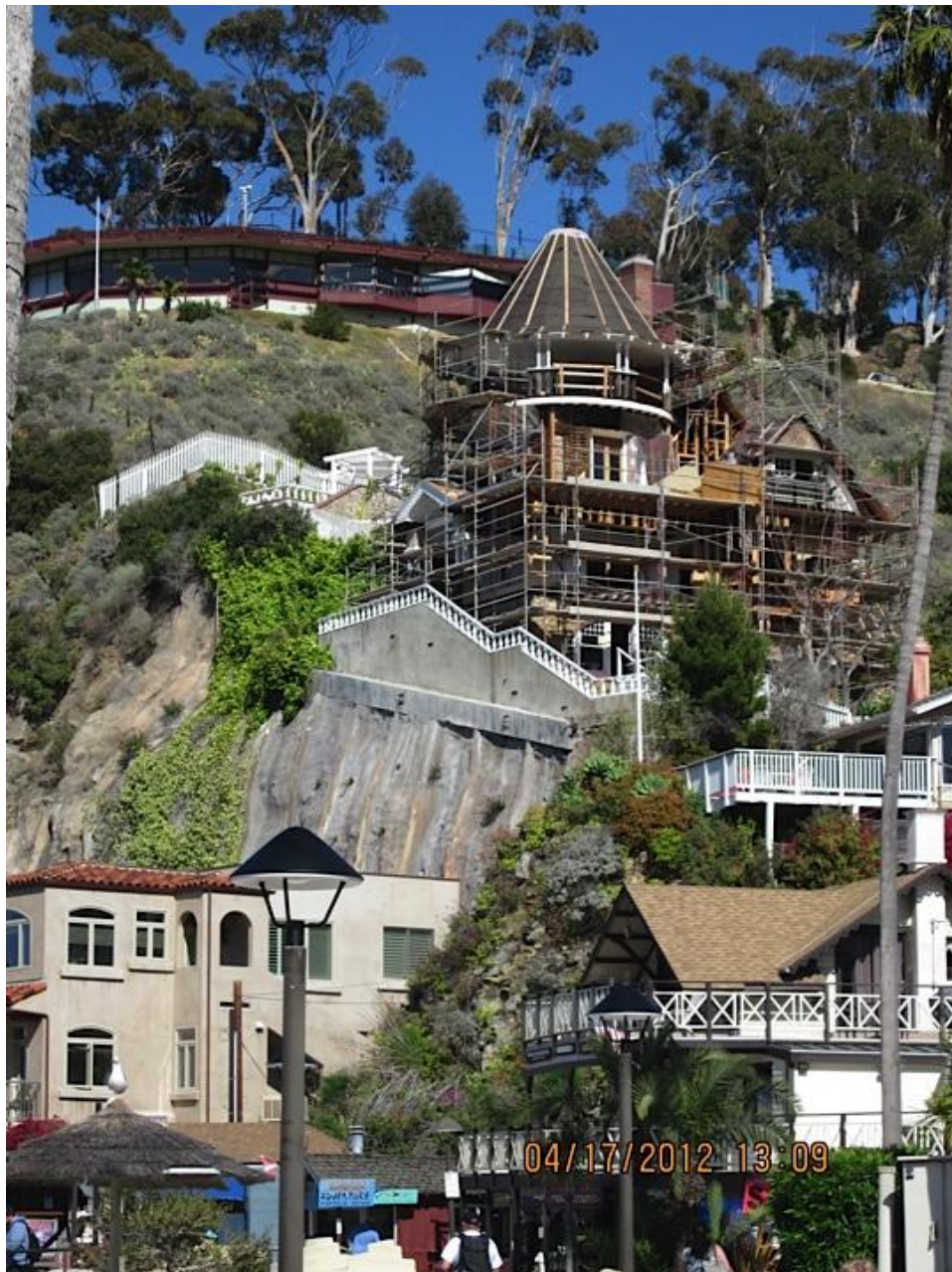
Pedestrian Way in Avalon

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Real Estate Boom in Town