



Stephen Lam/S.F. Chronicle  
Chronicle culture critic Peter Hartlaub kayaks in the Foster City Lagoon, where homes overlook the water.

# Foster City’s appeal develops with time

Once-scorned town’s lagoons, parks can’t help but charm

The Bay Area, a land where natural beauty confronts us on nearly every hill and bend in the road, had a condescending reaction to the Peninsula’s first planned community.

The Chronicle’s reliably acerbic architecture critic Allan Temko unloaded on the new waterfront town of Foster City in 1963. Before a single resident moved in, he called the first homes “innocent of any architectural distinction” and “visually crass and anarchic.”

**PETER HARTLAUB**  
TOTAL SF

“Here is not a revolutionary neighborhood, as it should have been, freeing the individual dwelling from the tyranny of small suburban lot and the traffic-bearing street,” Temko wrote of the burgeoning development, “but the most ordinary sort of tract cooked up in commercial builders’ minds.”

I grew up a couple of miles

away on the Burlingame/San Mateo border and had similarly conceited thoughts about Foster City. But I recently returned at reader request — exploring by bike, foot and personal watercraft — and discovered a small town filled with appeal and outdoor fun.

I owe you an apology, Foster City. I wasn’t really familiar with your game.

My journey started on the advice of Chronicle reader Alys-

**Hartlaub continues on A7**

New homes are built along the water in Foster City in 1974, 10 years after the first residents moved in. The planned community went from conception to 10,000 residents in just 11 years.



S.F. Chronicle

# Foreign tourism drop tied to Trump

Conferences, domestic visits help S.F. economic sector grow

By Roland Li  
STAFF WRITER

San Francisco’s critical tourism sector is growing in 2025 thanks to more conferences and domestic visitors, but President Donald Trump’s hostility toward foreigners is taking a toll, experts said.

Overnight international visitors are projected to drop to 2.26 million this year, down 3.2% from 2024. International spending will drop 2.7% to \$4.89 billion, according to the San Francisco Travel Association, the city’s tourism bureau.

Anna Marie Presutti, CEO of San Francisco Travel, said “we just can’t control” Trump’s policies, which have included detaining international visitors, clashing with foreign leaders and hiking the fee for tourist visas.

Visitors from Canada and Mexico in San Francisco and San Mateo County are expected to drop significantly this year, according to Oxford Economics. Canadian visitors are expected to decline 15% to 242,700; Mexican visitors are forecast to decline 7.8% to 535,000, compared with 2024.

Still, successful large-scale events have added to momentum to the city’s economy and burnished its image around the world. The NBA All-Star Game, Grateful Dead anniversary events and next month’s Laver Cup tennis

**Tourism continues on A9**

# Chinatown housing tower at risk over technicality

By Laura Waxmann  
STAFF WRITER

A large affordable apartment tower approved last year for San Francisco’s Chinatown seemed to be everything that housing advocates wanted.

The project would deliver 175 affordable homes. It would be the first new housing built in the heart of the iconic neighborhood in two decades. And it would revive a banquet hall where generations of Chinatown residents celebrated weddings, graduations and other special moments.

The “New Asia” project, which has broad political and community support, should be cruising toward groundbreaking.

Yet, the plan for the 155-foot-tower is on the verge of unraveling due to a bureaucratic technicality that could disqualify its developer from receiving crucial state financing.

“We are ready to go. We have community support. The city’s commitment to provide

**Tower continues on A8**

# Asleep at the wheel: Dream or nightmare?

Some doubt that viral video is real

By Rachel Swan and Brooke Park  
STAFF WRITERS

Cruising along the intersecting freeways of Oakland’s MacArthur Maze, a motorist was captivated by an unusual sight in the next lane: A woman in sunglasses appeared to be dozing off — head rested on a pillow — behind the wheel of a moving Tesla.

It was 2 p.m. on a Friday, Aug. 22, and, according to the witness, a collision had slowed traffic. All around the seemingly sleeping woman, drivers and passengers whipped out their phones and began filming. One person posted the footage on Reddit, where it



Santiago Mejia/S.F. Chronicle

**Tesla drivers told the Chronicle that monitors in their cars are sensitive and would not allow their attention to drift.**

quickly went viral, drawing equal parts astonishment, outrage and disbelief.

“Wow,” said Mikhayla Sowemimo, after watching the 10-second video on a Chronicle report-

er’s phone as she charged her Tesla Model 3 in a Target parking lot in San Francisco.

Sowemimo soon grasped why the clip had triggered such visceral reactions. It looked “absurd” and risky. While Teslas have extensive driver-assistance features, they are not fully self-driving — and are supposed to render a cat nap impossible.

In Reddit’s comments section, opinions ran the gamut. Maybe the woman deserved public exposure. Or perhaps she was acting, and the whole thing had been staged. (Inquiries to the original poster yielded no response as of Thursday).

Yet the woman also represented a sort of wish fulfillment, at a moment when many consumers are fixated on the idea of owning

**Drivers continues on A8**