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STUNNING VIEWS OF EARTH

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How to Turn Puerto Rico Into Hong Kong

On May 1, the government of Puerto Rico defaulted on some $400 million of bond repayments. This default has added urgency to a bill in Congress to rescue the island from its financial crisis, which is getting worse by the day. Puerto Rico faces more than $70 billion of debt, and the government is already in technical default on many of its bonds. What a rescue will mean.

An Astronaut’s View of Earth

In the IMAX film “A Beautiful Planet,” director Toni Myers takes audiences to the International Space Station for an astronaut’s-eye-view of the earth and the environmental issues stressing its fragile biosphere. With narration by actress Jennifer Lawrence, it was filmed over one year by four overlapping space station crews. See Page 10.
Grading and land development efforts are underway near Twin Oaks Valley Road and Village Drive in San Marcos, the location of Brookfield Residential’s new master planned community spanning more than 250 acres. The homebuilder and developer along with homebuilding partner California West Communities will debut this planned community — called Rancho Tesoro — in spring 2017.

The community is located near Discovery Lake — which can be accessed through the extensive trail system — and is driving much of the nature-oriented design.

Rancho Tesoro will showcase four neighborhoods — behind vehicular gates. The 347 detached homes will include private yards, four to five bedrooms, and two- to three-car garages. Homes will range in size from approximately 2,211 to 3,565 square feet.

Proposed private recreational amenities at Rancho Tesoro include a pool, barbecues, picnic tables, a covered trellis pavilion, neighborhood parks and access to multiple trails for walking, jogging and bicycling.

The community is located south of State Route 78.
University of California San Diego electrical and computer engineering professor Boubacar Kante will lead a three-year, $2.5 million project funded by the U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative aimed at making solar energy systems cost-competitive with traditional energy sources.

With this funding, the researchers plan to develop a new class of solar collectors — based on dielectric metasurfaces — that focus sun rays spanning a wider angular range and allow scaled-down, less expensive tracking systems.

The innovative project will be performed in collaboration with Sandia National Laboratories and will drive innovation to make solar energy systems cost-competitive with traditional energy sources.

Solar collectors are optical systems that collect and concentrate sunlight onto a small area receiver. The concentrated light heats a thermal fluid, which creates steam to generate clean electricity. Today’s state-of-the-art solar collectors typically use curve-shaped (parabolic) systems to concentrate sunlight. But their curvature limits the range of angles of incoming sunlight that the solar collectors can capture. As a result, these systems must continually track the sun’s motion throughout the day. Funding for the new project will be used to design, develop and fabricate a new class of planar solar collectors that can operate over a broad spectrum of sunlight, thereby reducing the need for expensive continuous tracking systems.

—Liezel Labios, UCSD

Flexible Wearable Electronic Skin Patch Offers New Ways to Monitor Alcohol Levels

Engineers at the University of California San Diego have developed a flexible wearable sensor that can accurately measure a person’s blood alcohol level from sweat and transmit the data wirelessly to a laptop, smartphone or other mobile device. The device can be worn on the skin and could be used by doctors and police officers for continuous, non-invasive and real-time monitoring of blood alcohol content.

The device consists of a temporary tattoo—which sticks to the skin, induces sweat and electrochemically detects the alcohol level—and a portable, flexible electronic circuit board, which is connected to the tattoo by a magnet and can communicate the information to a mobile device via Bluetooth. The work, led by nanoengineering professor Joseph Wang and electrical engineering professor Patrick Mercier, both at UC San Diego, was published recently in the journal ACS Sensors.

“Lots of accidents on the road are caused by drunk driving. This technology provides an accurate, convenient and quick way to monitor alcohol consumption to help prevent people from driving while intoxicated,” Wang said. The device could be integrated with a car’s alcohol ignition interlocks, or friends could use it to check up on each other before handing over the car keys, he added.

“When you’re out at a party or at a bar, this sensor could send alerts to your phone to let you know how much you’ve been drinking,” said Jayoung Kim, a materials science and engineering PhD student in Wang’s group and one of the paper’s co-first authors.

—Liezel Labios, UCSD

City Council Approves Buyer for Truax House

The San Diego City Council has authorized the sale of the city-owned property that includes the Truax House to Nakhshab Development and Design Inc. for $2.5 million. The property is at 540 W. Laurel Street and 2513/2515 Union Street.

The buyer intends to preserve, restore, and memorialize the Truax House. The proposal includes dedicating the ground floor of the Truax House as a community center, with communal courtyard space, and working with the adjacent property owners to provide public access to Maple Canyon. The Truax House was recently designated as historic by the city’s Historical Resources Board at the July 28 meeting.

Nakhshab intends to pursue a project that would replace the non-historic house at 540 W. Laurel St. with a new mixed use building including a coffee shop, office space, and residential units, including 10 percent of units to be qualified very low income housing. The proposal indicates the project will be sustainably designed.

The Truax House is named after San Diego LGBT leader Dr. A. Brad Truax, and was used as a hospice to serve AIDS patients. Truax died of the disease in 1988. Over the years, the building’s condition has deteriorated and repair costs are estimated at over $1.8 million.
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Northrop Grumman Begins Work on 2nd Japanese E-2D Hawkeye Aircraft

Northrop Grumman Corp. has received a U.S. Navy contract to begin production of a second Japanese E-2D Advanced Hawkeye airborne early warning and surveillance aircraft.

The first Japanese E-2D is in production and will be delivered in 2018.

The aircraft will be produced at the company's Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence in St. Augustine, Fla. Northrop Grumman will manufacture the Japanese E-2D on the same multiyear production line used for U.S. aircraft, which allows for a more efficient and affordable delivery schedule. The E-2D is the world's only airborne early warning aircraft in production.

“We are honored to continue this strong partnership through the E-2D program, which brings Japan a powerful new tool that meets their immediate airborne surveillance needs and facilitates information sharing across many platforms, making it a force multiplier for the future as well,” said Jane Bishop of Northrop Grumman.

In 2014, the Japanese Ministry of Defense competitively selected the E-2D to fulfill the nation's airborne early warning requirements. The Japan Air Self-Defense Force has operated the E-2C Hawkeye since the 1983. The E-2C is also currently used by Taiwan, France and Egypt.

Supervisors Place Lilac Hills Ranch Project on the November Ballot

County supervisors have voted to place the proposed 1,700-home Lilac Hills Ranch project initiative on November’s ballot for a countywide vote.

Supervisors voted 4-0 after hearing a county study outlining differences between the project ballot initiative that voters will consider and the project that county planners evaluated.

Supervisor Bill Horn, whose district includes the Valley Center area where the project is proposed, recused himself after the California Fair Political Practices Commission advised him he could have a conflict of interest because he has property in the area.

Supervisors said at their July 19 meeting that they were inclined to put the initiative on the ballot. However, they wanted the county’s Planning and Development Services department to put together an impact report for voters.

The analysis compares the initiative version of the project to both the county’s existing general plan and the version of the project that the county’s Planning Commission recommended the Board of Supervisors approve, with changes and modifications, in September 2015.

Lilac Hills Ranch’s backers submitted the project to the county for review and processing in 2012. After the Planning Commission recommended the board approve the project with changes in September 2015, the project’s developer announced they would seek signatures to put the project on the ballot. The county’s Registrar of Voters certified last month that Lilac Hills had qualified as an initiative.

That gave supervisors two possible actions under state elections law — to adopt the initiative project in whole, or place it on the ballot.

$4.3 Million Bequest Establishes New Scholarship at UC San Diego

The late Mary Andrews Haag has left more than $4.3 million from her estate to establish The Frederick and Mary Haag Scholarship Fund at the University of California San Diego.

The scholarship bequest was directed from the Mary Andrews Haag Trusts to provide scholarships for outstanding UC San Diego undergraduates. Haag was a longtime San Diego resident and philanthropist. She died in November 2014, at the age of 92.

Per the donor’s wishes, The Frederick and Mary Haag Scholarship Fund will provide merit-based scholarships to UC San Diego undergraduates. Haag wanted her gift to help attract students “of outstanding academic ability” to UC San Diego.
In the IMAX film “A Beautiful Planet,” director Toni Myers takes audiences to the International Space Station for an astronaut’s-eye-view of the earth and the environmental issues stressing its fragile biosphere.

With narration by actress Jennifer Lawrence and filmed over one year by four overlapping space station crews, “A Beautiful Planet” made its San Diego debut at the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center in Balboa Park in June.

Myers is a veteran of IMAX documentaries and her film career spans more than 40 years. Her director credits also include IMAX films “Hubble 3D” and “Space Station 3D.”

She has worked on IMAX since its inception in the late 1960s and has been involved in IMAX space films since writing and editing the first — the 1985 classic “The Dream is Alive.”

“We put (an IMAX) theater in the National Air and Space Museum in Wash-
ington,” she said. “The first director of that museum was (Apollo astronaut) Mike Collins. When he saw IMAX, a film called ‘To Fly,’ he said it was the only way people would experience what he did going to space. We already knew that but it was good that he said it. It took 10 years (from then) to get a camera on board the space shuttle.”

Myers worked on several space films for IMAX and NASA. She said they trained 145 astronauts on 24 shuttle flights to operate the cameras. With the shuttle’s retirement the way they had been making the films, with physical film, was also retired.

“We could no longer fly IMAX film and cameras to the ISS,” she said. “We had to switch to digital.

Myers said she was astonished at the quality of the digital images despite some purists’ instance on film’s superiority.

“The blacks are as black as you can make them. The colors are vivid and there’s no bleeding,” she said. “You could even see colors in the Bahaman reefs by moonlight. It allowed us to (see) what we never would have seen on film.”

Space Station crews shot over 11.5 terabytes of data for the project, and Myers said there was so much quality footage it was difficult not to make the film feature-length. “A Beautiful Planet’s” run-time is 45 minutes.

“It was a difficult job because I had such an embarrassment of riches,” she said. “We had a specific environmental message to convey, so those automatically went into the film. We stopped shooting in November 2015, and I had to deliver the finished film by March. It was a crunch.”

Myers said she was not trying to be preachy with the film’s environmental themes and that she wanted to use the fragility of the space station as a metaphor for the earth.

“We made a film back in 1990 about the earth called “Blue Planet,”” she said. “A lot has changed. (Then) the big worry was the ozone hole, and now things have become a lot more urgent.”

From the vantage point of the ISS, audiences can see the effect humans are having on the planet.

“You can see monster pollution clouds over China and we have a large sequence on the drought in California,” Myers said. “Water is a big theme. On the other side of the world in the Himalayas, glaciers are melting. The water supply of 500 million people is being affected.”

“A Beautiful Planet” also features footage of the earth at night with city lights visible from space. Myers said energy is another theme of the film with the need to find an alternative to fossil fuels.

“There is an incredible moonlit shot of the Gulf of Mexico,” she said. “You can see Dallas, Houston and San Antonio with all the oil well flares and fracking fires arrayed around.”

Myers said that with the exception of about one minute of the film, none of what is presented is Computer Generated Imagery ( CGI) effects.

“Everything in the planetary shots in the Milky Way sequences is not CGI,” she said. “It is real data. We do these sequences at the supercomputing center at the University of Illinois. Every one of the stars in the Milky Way is a real star with a real address in three-dimensional space. That is not made-up.”

Young people are the film’s target audience and Myers said she hopes to inspire tomorrow’s problem-solvers.

“I wanted to inspire those kids,” she said, “not berate them about what terrible humans are doing to the earth. I want them to go out and find the solution to the problems we are facing.”

This image is featured in the new IMAX film, “A Beautiful Planet,” narrated by Jennifer Lawrence.

NASA Commander Barry (Butch) Wilmore shoots a scene with the IMAX camera through the window of the International Space Station’s Cupola Observation Module.

Toni Myers is a veteran of IMAX documentaries and her film career spans more than 40 years.

NASA Commander Terry Virts and European Space Agency astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti smiling after her haircut, by Terry.

An awe-inspiring view of a sunrise from the International Space Station revealed in the new IMAX film, “A Beautiful Planet.”
Residents of San Diego are very fortunate to live here. So often when I speak with people in other cities, particularly those who live in cold climates where the icy hand of winter comes sweeping over the mountains, I hear real envy in their voices. We do enjoy the best weather of the country.

But there’s a downside. Friends and relatives love to come to visit. So there is often a question of where to take them to best showcase the beauty of our city.

Top of The Market is a definite good choice for enjoying the ocean, the sky, the views. It is a frequent favorite of the conventioneers who convene here. Whether bring a relative or simply enjoying an evening out, one can’t go wrong.

The Fish Market, one of San Diego’s premier seafood restaurants, is located at the water’s edge in Downtown San Diego, between Seaport Village and the Midway Museum, next to the huge statue of a sailor kissing a woman, similar to the iconic photo taken by Alfred Eisenstadt in Times Square when the Second World War ended in Europe. There was great joy of the war’s end and the sailor kissed every woman he could, when Eisenstadt saw him.

The Fish Market is a casual restaurant, with a retail display and a casual menu. Top Of The Market is upstairs (there’s an elevator, if needed), a formal dining room with white tablecloths, a sophisticated menu, and views to die for. City lights can be seen on one side, the lights of Coronado are visible across the bay and sailboats, pleasure craft, cruise ships and the occasional aircraft carrier bristling with military might often steam on the waters. The view is transfixing, adding to the pleasure of the dining experience.

The entire restaurant, both upstairs and downstairs, have been recently renovated. A fire struck at the end of May 2015 when an electric fan ignited. The restaurant was shut down for months. The downstairs area...
reopened last August and the “Top” re-opened in time for last Christmas.

The new features to the “Top” include an upgraded patio, an outdoor fire pit, improved interior décor and a “view” kitchen where diners can watch the busy cooks doing their magic.

Another change — there’s a new leader at the helm. The new chef is Stafford Mather, a self-taught culinary master who grew up in the Washington, D.C. area, loving the seafood found on the eastern shores. His ideas for cuisine are fresh, his recipes are often original and his plating is beautiful. He’s very personable and enjoys mixing with his guests as much as he does working in the kitchen.

The focus of the food is obviously on seafood, which is very fresh. The restaurant, in fact, has its own vessel that goes out to haul up, literally, the catch of the day. In addition, the restaurant has an appealing dessert menu and an excellent, fairly priced wine list. Suzanne Fish, the general manager, has been with the company for over 20 years and makes sure that guests leave the restaurant smiling. Service is attentive and excellent.

Many diners begin their evenings with selections from the raw bar, a listing of oysters and crab or prawn cocktails. The large chilled seafood platter includes half lobster.

The menu headings are starters, specialties and mesquite grilled. Soups and salads are listed as well. There are also chicken, lamb and filet dishes for diners who want to pass on the delights of the seafood.

Ahi Tuna Crudo which is raw but “cooked” needs to be absolutely fresh for preparation. This starter was amazing, flavorful and firm. Brussels Sprouts are the new “in” dish for millenials and the health conscious. This delicious starter, served “crispy” with yogurt, blended beautifully with the tartness and crunch of pomegranate seeds. A third starter to tease the palate was the pears & burrata. The fruit was sweet and succulent. The burrata, a combination of mozzarella and cream cheeses, was firm on the outside shell and moisty creamy on the inside.

The starters were paired with a Moet & Chandon champagne that was superb, adding bubbles and taste.

Striped Sea Bass, Tiger Shrimp and Alaska King Crab are available on the specialties menu. But the Sauteed New Bedford Sea Scallops grabbed me — seared on the surface and firm throughout — so well prepared. Mesquite Grilled Local Swordfish — probably caught earlier that day — had great flavor and texture. Close your eyes and it could be a fabulous steak. That was paired with an excellent Ramey Chardon nay.

With seafood, not all items may be available at all times. It depends what “is running” and seasonal. But Scottish Salmon was on the menu that evening and it was not to be missed — firm texture but moist and brimming with healthful omega 3’s. The paired ZD Pinot Noir Caneros really helped all the flavors come through.

Finally, the Apricot Parfait, a layered multi-colored serving of sweet delight that accompanied a cappuccino, really helped bring an amazing dinner to a close.

Whether to impress out-of-town visitors or simply to bask in the joy of outstanding cuisine by Chef Mather and creative wine pairings by sommelier Erica Bravo — with great ambiance, views and service — dining at Top Of The Market can be the right choice. Prices are moderate to high but certainly worth the experience.

Top Of The Market is open for lunch and dinner daily. Reservations are recommended. There is valet parking and also meter parking on the large lot but be careful to feed the meters enough. The restaurant is located at 750 North Harbor Drive. Reservations may be made online or by calling (619) 232-3474.
On May 1, the government of Puerto Rico defaulted on some $400 million of bond repayments. This default has added urgency to a bill in Congress to rescue the island from its financial crisis, which is getting worse by the day.

Puerto Rico faces more than $70 billion of debt, and the government is already in technical default on many of its bonds. Billions more come due in the weeks ahead, and the government is reportedly out of funds to repay.

These debts don’t even include an additional $43 billion of unfunded pension liabilities. Add it all together and the debt reaches 150 percent of GDP. All the government has done is raise taxes, with the sales tax recently hiked from 7 to 11.5 percent. Tragically, Puerto Rico has become the Detroit of the Caribbean.

By law, Puerto Rico can’t declare bankruptcy, but the territory is in de facto Chapter 9 already.

The House Republican rescue plan would allow the island to restructure its debt and delay payments as it attempts to rebuild its shattered economy. The statistics are heartbreaking: Almost half the residents are in poverty (and more than half of all children); only about 40 percent of adults are even in the workforce; half of families collect welfare benefits; and more than 10 percent of the island’s residents have left for Florida, Texas, New York or other safe havens.

Puerto Ricans are American citizens whose lives have been turned upside down. The U.S. government has a moral, if not legal, obligation to help. But as a territory Puerto Rico needs to agree to help itself.

Here is what shouldn’t happen: a financial cash bailout from U.S. taxpayers. Puerto Rico is 100 percent responsible for all of its taxes and spending except its Social Security tax and spending. And as such, U.S. taxpayers had no say whatsoever in the amount of debt Puerto Rico took on and should not have to pay for Puerto Rico’s bad decisions. A U.S. bailout would only reward bad behavior and finance another spend-and-borrow binge.

The media have invented a story here that the villains are the investors and hedge funds who bought the Puerto Rico bonds. The bondholders are certainly not guiltless for lending money to a government that is recklessly out of control. And bondholders will surely pay a heavy price for their financial mistake. They are likely...
to get, at most, 70 cents for each dollar they are owed. So the bondholders will be punished by the marketplace.

The real source of the crisis is the Puerto Rican government itself. Puerto Rico’s own elected government has failed its citizens. Even on the eve of the crisis, Puerto Rico continued to spend and borrow as if it were running a Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme.

The Republican plan that has the support of House Speaker Paul Ryan would create a strong financial oversight board to take control of the government’s finances, taxes and budgeting decisions. We know this model works. In the 1990s it helped save Washington, D.C., during its darkest hours of financial troubles. Now the city is booming.

Democrats, such as Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, are unfortunately playing politics and are accusing Republicans of acting like “colonists.” In reality, the GOP plan offers a financial life raft for the island, and if the Puerto Rican legislature or voters prefer to go it alone, they should have a simple up or down vote on whether to agree to a control board.

The thorny and controversial issue is how to restructure the outstanding debt. There are at least a dozen classifications of bonds, and the bondholders do have a legal right to repayment or to be able to sue in court.

About one-quarter of the debt carries a constitutional “full faith and credit” guarantee of repayment granted by the government of Puerto Rico.

Those constitutionally guaranteed bondholders must be put first in line for repayment as is consistent with their legal rights. The Republican plan as currently written would take away their right to sue in court.

Puerto Rico’s government would like nothing more than a “cram down” repayment structure without the bondholders’ consent. This would not only be unfair to the bondholders; it would also hurt Puerto Rico in the long term, because only a nitwit would ever again agree to buy PR bonds when the island has shown it will blatantly violate contractual obligations.

None of this will work unless there is improvement in the island’s economy. Why not turn Puerto Rico into a Hong Kong in the western hemisphere through new rounds of tax, regulatory, property rights and welfare reforms? The first step is to restructure the debt and then jump-start the dormant private economy so that the standard of living starts rising again and Puerto Rico has the economic muscle to pay its bills.

Stephen Moore is a distinguished visiting fellow at The Heritage Foundation, economics contributor to FreedomWorks and author of “Who’s the Fairest of Them All?” reprinted with permission of Newsmax Magazine.
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