OXD

Future Backwards

Understanding our past and imagining new futures

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For   SPUR Transit + Design
By   Gordon Ross, Vice President and Partner
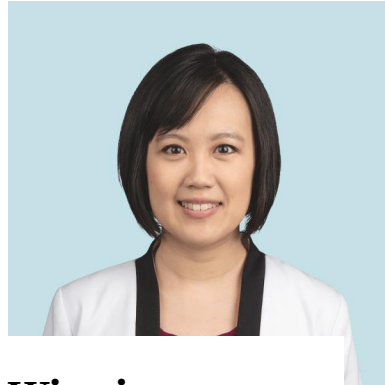**Date** June 27, 2019

Meet the team

Gordon
Ross

Vice President and Partner

Winnie
Ho

**Senior User Experience
Designer**

Future Backwards

Origins

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About this method

An **alternative strategic planning workshop method** that helps widen the range of perspectives a group of people can take on understanding their **past** and the possibilities of their **future**. Useful at the start of strategic planning, service design, and policy projects to help surface different perspectives.

Why use this method?

- Illuminates hopes and fears within an organization
- Understand which entrained patterns of past perceptions are influencing an organization's future and break out of those patterns
- Brings diverse perspectives to a problem space and highlights similarities and differences of the past(s) and future(s)

Activity: Future Backwards
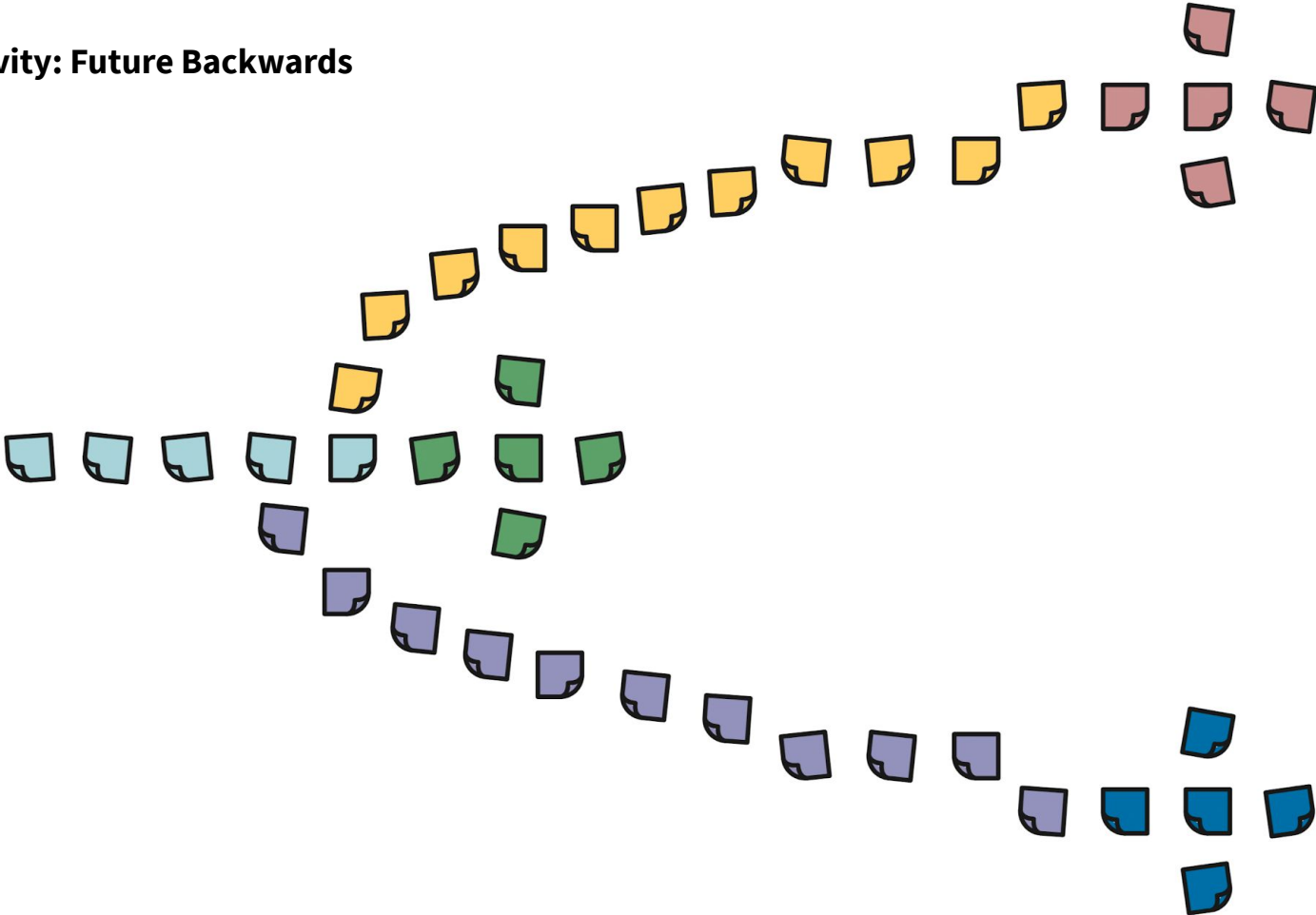
What is the future state of transportation infrastructure in San Francisco?
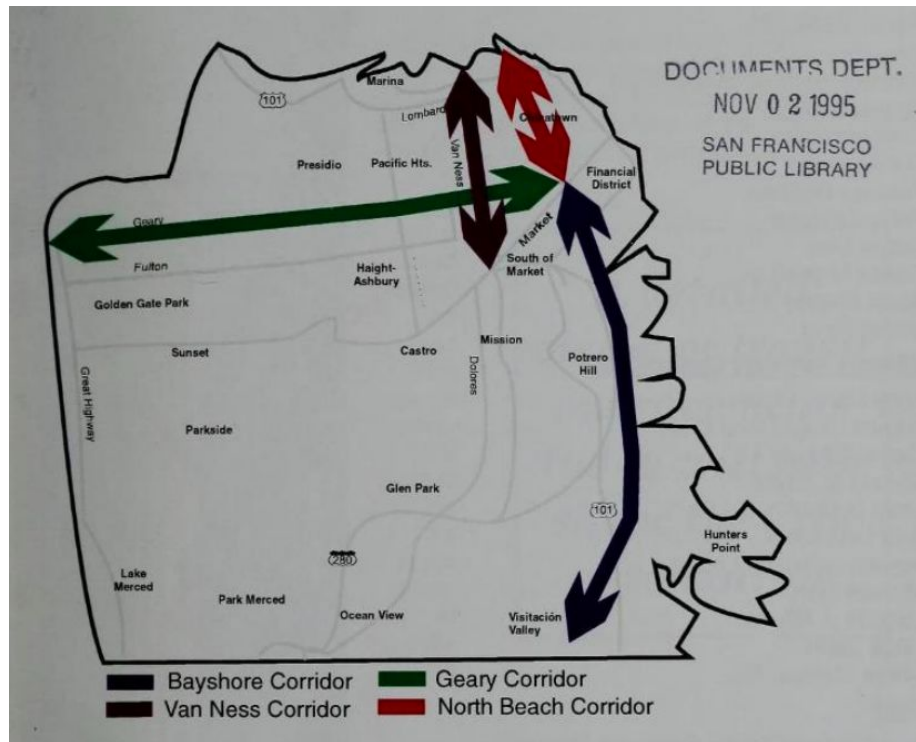
Background and context

Prior generation: 1995 Four Corridors Plan

Shaped 25 years of major transit investments

All four corridors built or under construction now

When done well, such plans can be transformative

ConnectSF goals

Equity **Environmental Sustainability** **Economic Vitality** **Safety & Livability** **Accountability and Engagement**

Key findings recap

Fast paced growth has occurred since 1980, and will likely continue.

Our transportation policies are working, but we need to do more to meet our aggressive goals.

New policies and investments—both incremental and transformational—are needed.
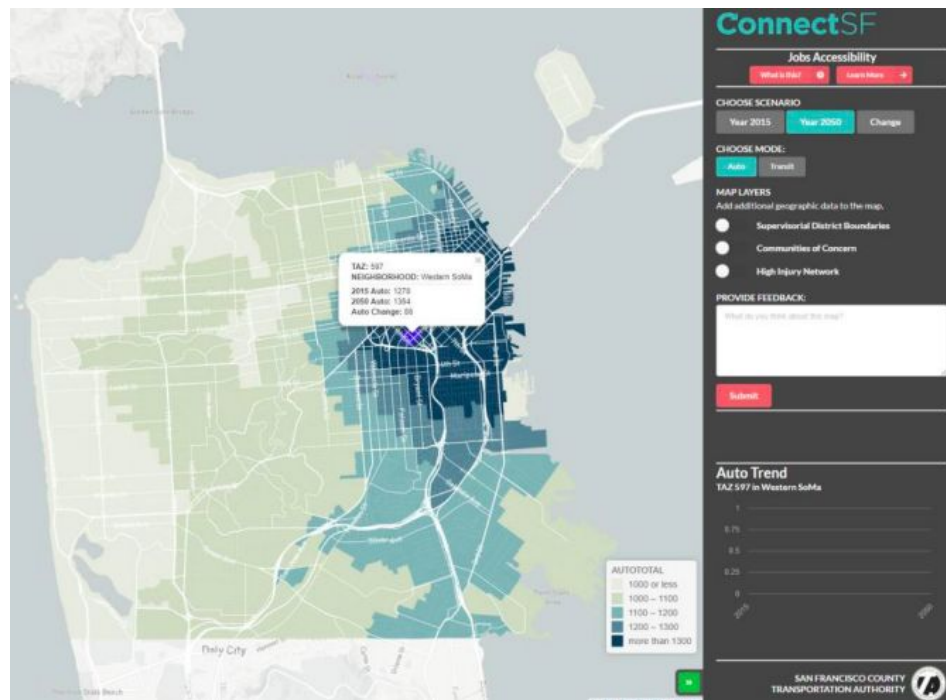
ConnectSF: overall process

Opportunities for engagement

Explore interactive maps available at:
www.connectSF.org/about/
transportation-needs

In-person outreach in summer/fall 2019

Request a presentation
(email connectsf@sfgov.org)

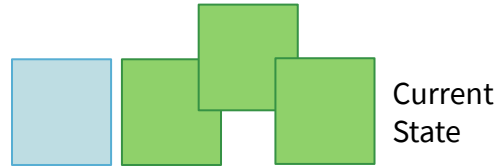# What is the future state of transportation infrastructure in San Francisco?

How it works

Current State

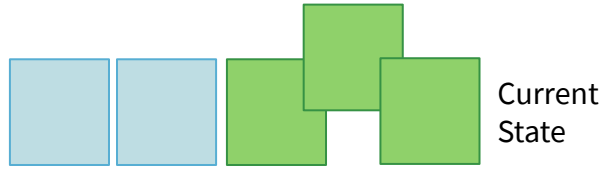Describe the Current State of affairs.

How it works

Current
State

Describe the one most significant past event
which shaped the Current State.

How it works

Current
State

Now describe the past event that came before
that event…

How it works

Past events

Current State

Keep going backwards with past events (one at a time) as far back into the past as is appropriate.

How it works

Impossibly Good Future

Past events
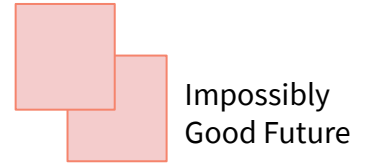
Current State

Describe the conditions and experiences of an Impossibly Good Future (best-case future state).

How it works

Impossibly
Good Future

Past events

Current
State

Impossibly
Bad Future

Describe the conditions and experiences of
an Impossibly Bad Future (worst-case future state).

How it works

Impossibly
Good Future

Path to Impossibly Good Future

Past events

Current
State

Path to Impossibly Bad Future

Impossibly
Bad Future
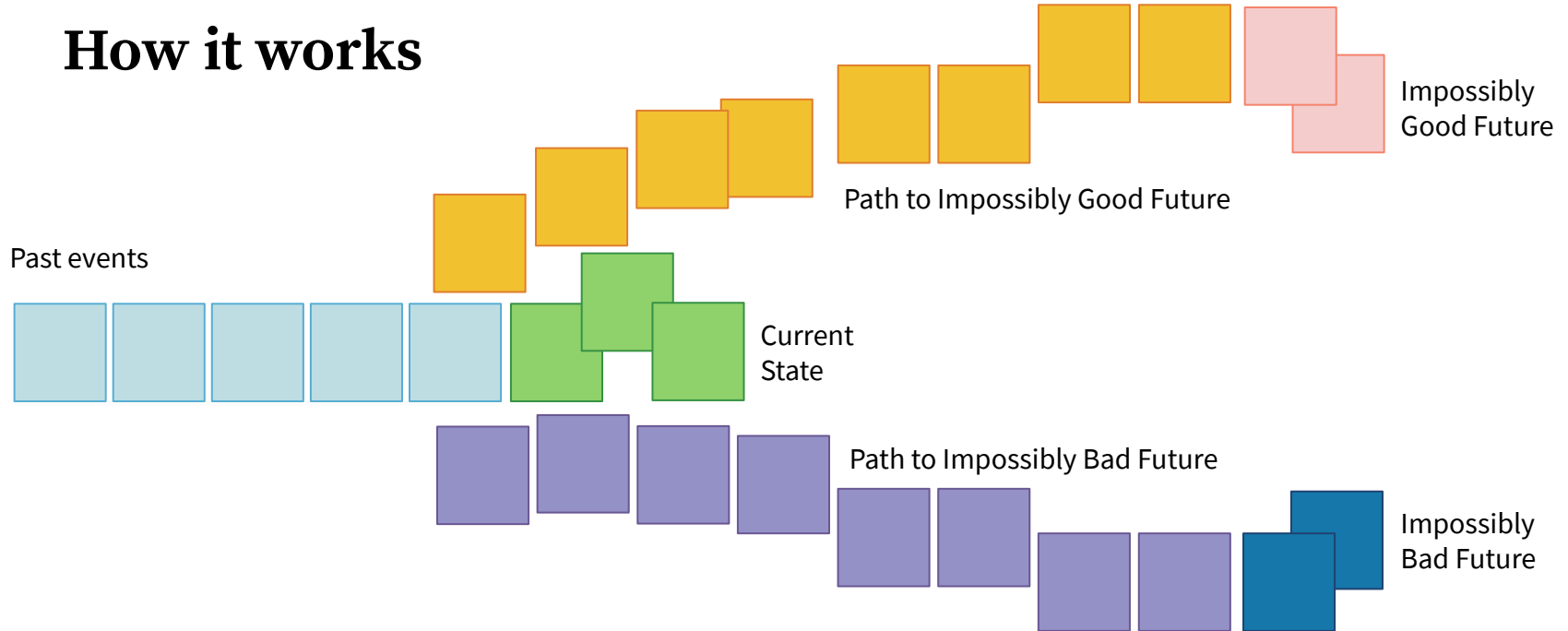
Define past events that lead to the
Impossibly Good Future and Impossibly Bad Future.

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Sharing the output

There are different approaches.

- Have a **spokesperson** explain their output as others **rotate** around to see what other groups have put together.
- Groups **take turns presenting** output while others listen.

Sharing the output

Various perspectives between groups become apparent.

Acknowledging differences in perspective aids in the process of organizational conflict identification and resolution.

Reflection

Did any surprising ideas or issues arise in your group?

Where do you see yourself and your current work on this map?

How might you use this workshop technique and insights from today?

If nothing else, remember…

Future Backwards is an alternative planning method that:

- **Illuminates** hopes and fears within the organization.
- **Helps understand** which entrained patterns of past perceptions are influencing an organization's future and break out of those patterns.
- **Brings diverse perspectives** to a problem space and highlights similarities and differences of the past(s) and future(s).

Make New
Experiences
Possible

Thank you

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