Ideas and action for a better city.
SPUR brings people together to solve the big problems cities face.

In our “big tent” convening model, people from across the political spectrum sit down together to ask big questions and work out practical, actionable solutions.

What should cities do to prepare for climate change?

How do we restore the Bay Area’s middle class?

What can we do to bring down the cost of housing?

How do we give people better options for getting around the region?

What’s the best way to fund local government in the coming decades?
We help the cities of the Bay Area live up to their highest potential.
We organize our work into seven policy areas, each with an advocacy agenda.

1. Regional Planning
   Concentrate growth inside existing cities.

2. Community Planning
   Build great neighborhoods.

3. Housing
   Make it affordable to live here.

4. Transportation
   Give people better ways to get where they need to go.

5. Economic Development
   Lay the foundations of economic prosperity — for everyone.

6. Sustainability and Resilience
   Reduce our ecological footprint and make our cities resilient.

7. Good Government
   Support local government.
We do this work through research, education and advocacy.
Research

We identify pressing problems and develop strategies to solve them.

• We initiated study of a third crossing for San Francisco Bay that could potentially connect Caltrain and high-speed rail to Oakland and beyond.

• We set a path for how the Bay Area can wean itself from fossil fuels and become a model of sustainable energy for other cities around the world.

• We proposed seven groundbreaking design solutions for how to address sea level rise at San Francisco’s Mission Creek.

• We conducted an extensive analysis of San Jose’s fiscal challenges and proposed funding solutions that were then passed at the ballot.

• We launched a policy project to investigate the economic potential of high-speed rail to shape growth in the Central Valley.
Education

We engage people in the life of their city to build a constituency for urbanism.

- 12,100 people attended 260 public forums at our San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland locations.

- 30,000 San Franciscans relied on our Voter Guide to navigate a local ballot with a whopping 25 measures. 74 percent of our recommendations prevailed.

- 1 million people visited www.spur.org for information about our research, policy positions and public events.

- 122 news articles in local and national publications relied on our expertise to help make sense of the big stories affecting cities in the Bay Area and beyond.
Advocacy

We work with decision-makers to get our proposals put into practice.

• We did deep technical work on major rezoning efforts in San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland.

• We successfully advocated for two important regional governments to merge their staffs under a single agency that will guide regional planning and transportation.

• We collaborated with Oakland leaders on the creation of the city’s first Department of Transportation, which launched this year.

• Working with partner advocates, we convinced Santa Clara County to reject a proposal to annex 200 acres of farmland into city limits.

• We advocated for housing developments that would add thousands of new units across the price spectrum.

• We helped pass a bond measure that will fund BART to make long-overdue repairs, improve service and increase passenger capacity.
Bay Area

SPUR Report:  
Fossil-Free Bay Area

This major report set a path for the Bay Area to eschew fossil fuels in favor of using high-efficiency renewable sources like solar and wind for nearly all of our energy needs, including transportation and buildings. The benefits of a fossil-free future will be broadly shared and can offer a model for other cities and urban regions around the world. Our report proposed three categories of action: consume less fossil fuel, convert most energy uses to electricity and provide a 100 percent renewable electricity supply.
Race, Police Violence, Safety and Cities

This summer, as confrontations between irate citizens and police departments escalated in cities around the country, SPUR published a series of articles focused on local responses to police violence. Protests in the Bay Area were peaceful — but that didn't mean there weren't real tensions and legitimate grievances. If anything, we noted, the peaceful nature of the marches in Oakland and elsewhere made it even more important for those of us who care about the Bay Area to pay close attention to the reasons people were marching — and to work hard to address the causes. Our series explored the links between our region's housing shortage, gentrification and racial tensions and proposed ways we can move forward to create safer, more equitable cities.

A New Chapter for Regional Planning

Ever since the creation of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in 1972, Bay Area leaders have sought to merge the region’s transportation funding agency with its council of governments and land use planning agency. In 2016, after a year of discussion and significant advocacy from SPUR and others, MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) voted to combine their staffs under a single agency and executive director. This change takes on greater urgency now that the latest update to the region’s long-range land use and transportation plan, Plan Bay Area, shows our housing shortage getting worse — not better — in the future. The plan update offers a sobering picture of our future and should serve as a wake-up call that our current approach to regional and local planning is not succeeding. The merger of ABAG and MTC can be part of the solution to addressing these long-standing challenges.
As the pressure for more jobs and housing increases in the Bay Area, one old and problematic idea has re-emerged: annexing farmland to grow cities at their outer edges. When Morgan Hill put forth a proposal to annex approximately 200 acres of agricultural land into its city limits, SPUR and numerous other organizations opposed the proposal through letters and public comments. The Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission wisely voted no. Soon after the vote, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority and the County Planning Department launched a planning process to find solutions to piecemeal agricultural land conversion and “ranchette” development. SPUR is serving in an advisory role in that effort and will continue tracking its progress.
Our Big Loss: State Proposal to Streamline Housing Goes Down

In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown proposed legislation that would have streamlined the creation of new multifamily housing in certain places. Projects that met existing zoning requirements and included some affordable units would have been allowed to proceed “by right,” meaning that they would not be subject to case-by-case local approvals. Having seen firsthand how good housing projects can get stopped or stalled by bad processes, SPUR strongly supported the concept. Ultimately, the effort was defeated by opposition from labor, some environmental advocates and cities concerned about the loss of local control. SPUR will continue to work with our legislators and partners on state housing policy reforms that will allow for speedier housing creation.

A Win for More Housing: In-Law Units Get a Big Boost

SPUR has long supported in-law units in San Francisco, and we took our advocacy and support farther afield this year. In 2016, legislators around California and the Bay Area saw opportunities to build more housing with little impact by making in-law units easier to build. Once illegal in many cities, this simple way to add more housing — create an additional unit in the backyard, basement, attic or garage — has become a welcome tool in the fight to make urban housing affordable. Not only are these units now allowed citywide in San Francisco, they were also made easier to build in Oakland, San Jose and several other cities around the region. Meanwhile, the state passed three bills to streamline the process of approving in-law units and reduce barriers to their construction.
The Bay Bridge and BART tube connect San Francisco and the Peninsula with Oakland and the East Bay, making them vital to the future of the Bay Area. As our region’s population continues to grow, we will need more ways to get people back and forth across the Bay. SPUR published *Designing the Bay Area’s Second Transbay Rail Crossing* — a call to think about adding a new rail tunnel. The report defined the key planning and governance decisions ahead and recommended funding initial planning with a bond. Momentum for the idea has grown since November’s $3.5 billion BART bond passed; the measure included $200 million that could be used for planning how to increase capacity over the long term. A future crossing could connect the Caltrain Corridor with the Capitol Corridor through both standard and high-speed train service, transforming California’s rail network for the next generation.
Planning Big
for the Future
of Downtown Oakland

When the City of Oakland released its development alternatives for the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan, SPUR took particular interest. Our 2015 report *A Downtown for Everyone* proposed adding 50,000 jobs and 25,000 residents downtown in order to provide more opportunity and help downtown take on a more important role in the region. In our view, the alternatives the city presented were too timid and amounted to a major downzoning — the opposite of the approach Oakland should be taking downtown. We advocated for increasing development capacity and for identifying a strong organizing vision that treats downtown as a whole, which would help guide policy decisions about everything from transportation to urban design in specific neighborhoods.
Tackling Oakland's Housing Shortage

Oakland city leaders have been deeply focused on finding ways to address the housing shortage that threatens to irrevocably change the city. Last year, SPUR joined a broad group of housing experts, advocates and practitioners brought together by Mayor Libby Schaaf to draft a report geared toward preserving 17,000 existing homes and creating 17,000 new ones. This report, *Oakland at Home*, laid out steps to protect renters, retain the affordability of existing housing, create resources for affordable housing and build new market-rate housing. The report also called for new sources of funding for affordable housing. The affordable housing and infrastructure bonds that passed in November 2016 (page 26) will help make these ideas a reality.

A New Strategy for Oakland's Transportation

For years the City of Oakland had struggled to address a crushing backlog of street maintenance, street safety and transportation projects. Starting in 2014, SPUR worked with the mayor’s office, city staff and other advocates to advance the creation of a new Department of Transportation. An interim director of transportation started this year, and the department adopted a bold strategic plan that puts equity and increased capacity at the forefront. In tandem, SPUR helped to develop Oakland’s $600 million infrastructure bond, which passed by an overwhelming 82 percent. In addition to supporting other city needs, Measure KK will provide a funding stream for the department to make Oakland’s streets safer, more comfortable and more functional for many years to come.
Big Win: 
East Bay Voters Pass Affordable Housing and Infrastructure Bonds

This year SPUR endorsed ballot initiatives in Oakland and the East Bay for the first time. Two measures we were particularly vocal in supporting were Measure A1, Alameda County’s $580 million affordable housing bond, and Measure KK, Oakland’s $600 million infrastructure bond. These initiatives won by wide margins (73 percent and 82 percent, respectively) and will supply crucial financing for much-needed affordable housing, libraries, parks, fire stations, roads and so much other critical infrastructure.
Diridon Station: Shaping the Future of the South Bay

SPUR launched Next Stop: Diridon, a new initiative to make the most of one of the Bay Area’s best opportunities for sustainable growth. Once high-speed rail and BART arrive, Diridon Station will become one of the most transit-connected places in the nation. The 240-acre area surrounding the station is an important opportunity to channel a significant amount of jobs and housing into walkable neighborhoods near transit. SPUR’s research and advocacy work will focus on what it will take to make the station design, station access, transit service, land use and placemaking the very best it can be.
Despite San Jose’s high household income, the city has been in a precarious financial position for years, struggling to provide an appropriate level of public services. Compared to peer cities in Santa Clara County and around California, San Jose has less revenue per capita from the two largest sources of local government revenue: sales and property taxes. To better understand the reasons for this, SPUR produced the report *Back in the Black: A Fiscal Strategy for Investing in San Jose’s Future*. The report included an extensive analysis of San Jose’s budget and the causes of its fiscal challenges. We made the case for why the city needs additional resources and provided a basis for SPUR to support and advocate for appropriate revenue measures, such as modernizing the business tax (November’s Measure G) and raising the sales tax (June’s Measure B), both of which voters passed in 2016.
Big Wins: Voters Fund Affordable Housing and Transportation

In November, voters in Santa Clara County and San Jose passed two game-changing ballot measures. SPUR endorsed both measures, recognizing the critical investments they will bring to affordable housing and transportation. Measure A will generate an unprecedented $950 million to build permanent supportive housing and low-income housing and to help first-time home buyers across the county. And Measure B, 2016’s largest transportation measure in the Bay Area, will bring in more than $6 billion for a number of critical transit projects, including BART Silicon Valley Phase II, expanded service on Caltrain and road maintenance. SPUR strongly supported and advocated for both Measures A and B.

Safeguarding Water for Silicon Valley’s Future

As the drought hit the five-year mark, we partnered with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation to ask: What’s the path to a sustainable water future for the Peninsula and the South Bay? Silicon Valley has historically had a reliable water supply, but as its cities grow and as the climate changes, there is more the region can do to improve conservation, understand its groundwater resources and expand water reuse and recycling. The resulting report, *Future-Proof Water for Silicon Valley*, updated our 2013 research with local analysis and offered 10 big ideas to advance sustainability in Silicon Valley’s water systems and supplies.
High-Speed Rail to Connect San Jose and the Central Valley

This year the California High-Speed Rail Authority voted to build its initial segment from the Central Valley to San Jose, with service continuing on to San Francisco. This was a reversal of prior decisions, which would have begun rail service between the Central Valley and the Los Angeles area first. SPUR was strongly supportive of this shift, in part because it will help bring needed investments for intercity Bay Area rail like Caltrain and BART. Realizing the full benefits
of high-speed rail in California will require a real commitment to walkability and transit-oriented land uses around the stations, as well as a focused effort to concentrate job and housing growth downtown in the cities with high-speed rail stations. This year SPUR launched a major policy project looking at the economic potential of high-speed rail to shape growth in the Central Valley. SPUR is working with leaders from the High-Speed Rail Authority, other state agencies and local and regional governments from the Bay Area south through Merced, Fresno and Bakersfield. Our goal is to identify new policy tools to capture the benefits of high-speed rail, both for the state and for all the cities along the route.
Preparing for Sea Level Rise at Mission Creek

This year we brought together a historic international collaboration to understand the vulnerability of San Francisco’s waterfront to sea level rise and to propose design concepts for resilience. SPUR convened partners including five San Francisco city departments, the State of California, and public and private entities in the Netherlands, including the research institute Delta Alliance and the engineering consultancy Arcadis. The project, which focused on low-lying Mission Creek and Mission Bay, showed that there are many ways we can add greater flood protection to the waterfront while creating beautiful public spaces. The seven design concepts borrowed some innovative ideas from the Dutch, and the report weighed the pros and cons of each without selecting a preferred alternative. Next steps for this project will include broader public engagement to understand which ideas people like and would want to study further.
Promoting Housing for All in San Francisco

As the city’s housing shortage continued, SPUR worked on a number of initiatives to help create more housing at all levels of affordability. We advocated for making 100 percent affordable housing projects easier to build through the Affordable Housing Bonus Program and streamlined legislation. SPUR also pushed hard to get the city’s affordable housing requirements right. We worked closely with decision-makers and other advocates to negotiate compromises related to June 2016’s Proposition C affordability requirements, and we engaged with the advisory committee that was tasked with studying how to maximize affordable housing while allowing market-rate housing to continue to grow.

The Transbay Transit Center Emerges

In the middle of San Francisco’s South of Market neighborhood, a new transportation landmark is rising from the ashes of the old Transbay Terminal. The three-block-long Transbay Transit Center will soon be open as a major terminal for up to 300 buses per hour. In the future, the center will become a downtown commuter rail and high-speed rail station, as well as providing a quick connection to BART on Market Street. The terminal’s 5.4-acre rooftop park, and the high-rises going up around it, are transforming the neighborhood. Despite funding and construction challenges, the city’s commitment to high-speed rail — and to growing transit neighborhoods — is a model for the nation.
While several major transportation funding measures passed across the region, in San Francisco a SPUR-led campaign was unable to persuade voters to pass a sales tax increase (Proposition K) to pay for urgent transportation and homelessness needs. The passage of companion measure Proposition J, which established the programs but not the funding, seemed to signal that voters supported these programs in concept — but didn’t understand the need to pass a separate sales tax to pay for them.
Expanding the Reach of the SPUR Voter Guide

An overwhelming 24 measures appeared on the local portion of the November 2016 San Francisco ballot. We responded with our best SPUR Voter Guide yet, providing pros, cons and in-depth analysis of every measure on a new interactive website, which allowed us to reach 30,000 voters. San Franciscans largely agreed with our analysis, voting to fund BART, affordable housing and schools and to defeat four harmful measures that would have undone years of good government reforms. We are proud to offer this resource to voters, but ultimately it’s a poor practice to deflect policy-setting for so many core needs to ballot questions. This is an area for reform SPUR will be tracking in 2017.
MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT.
spurvoterguide.org
Income and Expenses
Fiscal Year 2016-2017

INCOME

- Membership: $2,436,404 (34%)
- Special Events: $1,576,950 (23%)
- Grants: $2,341,696 (33%)
- Earned Revenues: $745,233 (10%)

Total: $7,100,283 (100%)

EXPENSES

- Policy, programs and publications: $5,460,587 (78%)
- Development: $1,061,897 (15%)
- Administration: $515,009 (7%)

Total: $7,037,493 (100%)
President’s Letter

What We Stand For

We live in an extraordinary place. As I reflect on another year of hard work, I am once again struck by how much we in the Bay Area have to be grateful for. Some of it happened by luck, and some of it happened by design, but today it’s clear that we are building something special in this region.

When we’re at our best, we can think about the Bay Area as a model for how a metropolitan region should work: a place that embraces new ideas and new people; a place that welcomes investment and job creation while also taking care of the environment; a place that is deeply committed to social inclusion and equity.

But there’s still a lot of work to do. We have some deeply rooted problems — many of our own making — that we must overcome, from decades of under-investment in transportation to a structural undersupply of housing that is driving waves of displacement across the region. That’s where SPUR comes in. Our job is to figure out what to do about significant problems so that we can help the cities of the Bay Area live up to their highest potential.

I believe SPUR’s model was built for times like this. We’ve understood for a long time that the federal government does not have the capacity to come in and solve our problems for us. We are, in a very real sense, on our own. As a place-based, non-partisan organization that does its work in the Bay Area, we are ready to face the years ahead with all of the energy and resolve, all of the creativity and openness that will be required.

We are so fortunate to have the support and involvement of thousands of members and donors — all of you who care about this place, are willing to face problems honestly and want to work to make things better. Because of you, SPUR has become the organization it is today: a catalyst for change, a place for the essential conversations to happen, an advocate for the future that we need to build together.

Thank you for making this work possible.

Gabriel Metcalf
President and CEO
SPUR Annual
Contributors

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We apologize for any omissions or inaccuracies to this listing and will publish any corrections in a future issue of The Urbanist. This list represents gifts made in 2016.

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Favorite way to get around San Francisco?
UberPool. When I have time, it’s a great way to meet new and interesting people.

Best cultural event/festival to get to know the city?
Bay to Breakers. You see all types, and it’s great people-watching.

You gaze into the future and see San Francisco 50 years from now. What does it look like?
I see a much more vertical city with incredible vitality — brought about through thoughtful new density — and a broad diversity of people.

What civic project or initiative brings you the most hope for the future?
High-speed rail is a transformative opportunity to bring people together and connect communities.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it?
Popeye’s, of course. It’s my guilty pleasure.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood?
A stroll on Macondray Lane at sunset, then a table on the terrace at Café Meuse. Technically two things, but one experience if you ask me.
You gaze into the future and see San Jose 50 years from now. What does it look like? A city with taller buildings and a significantly larger downtown core that includes offices, housing and a mix of other uses.

What civic project or initiative brings you the most hope for the future? Bringing BART to downtown San Jose and high-speed rail to Diridon Station. Also, it gives me hope to see so many segments of the community each working on improving a different aspect of the city.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be? BART around the Bay.

If you could change one state or local law, what would it be? We have too many elections, too often.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood? Peters’ Bakery, founded in 1936. They’re known for their burnt almond cake.
Best cultural event/festival to get to know San Francisco?
Gay Pride. It's the event that most captures the spirit of individual expression, as well as acceptance, that makes San Francisco such an amazing place.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be?
Caltrain and high-speed rail connecting to the Transbay Terminal, the East Bay and then on to Sacramento.

If you could change one state or local law, what would it be?
I would amend the California Environmental Quality Act to eliminate frivolous appeals and lawsuits that can block essential infrastructure projects.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it?
This has to be a trick question. The amazing thing about the Bay Area is that you have so many incredible food and restaurant choices.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood?
I currently live in Berkeley, but in my old neighborhood in San Francisco it's Simple Pleasures Cafe in the Richmond.
Robert Joseph  
Senior Program Officer  
Tipping Point Community  
Oakland Board, SPUR

Favorite way to get around Oakland?
Biking. It allows you to see people and neighborhoods more closely and to stop frequently to check out all of the attractions.

Best cultural event/festival to get to know the city?
The farmers’ market in Jack London Square on Sundays: local produce and baked goodies, amazing people-watching (actual diversity and integration), live jazz, waterfront, cityscape and sunshine.

You gaze into the future and see Oakland 50 years from now. What does it look like?
On its current trajectory, Oakland will be a lot more populated, congested, expensive, and culturally homogeneous. I joined SPUR to help change that trajectory — to support smart, equitable development with the hope that Oakland can retain some of its original character, culture and diversity while growing economically. We’ve got our work cut out for us.

What civic project or initiative brings you the most hope for the future?
Our future success will rely heavily on our K-12 education system. I’m excited by an increasing movement to integrate instruction in academics, career preparation and civic engagement to provide students with practical knowledge and experience.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be?
The demolition of Interstate 980 in Oakland. It displaced local residences and businesses and divided West Oakland from downtown. Studies show the highway is underutilized and a regular roadway could serve the same purpose. It’s time to correct a past wrong and revitalize an important section of Oakland with green spaces and mixed-use neighborhoods.
You gaze into the future and see San Francisco 50 years from now. What does it look like? A completely unique, intelligently run and progressive city serving as the cultural center of a functionally efficient and well-organized regional Bay Area government.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be?

The Transit Center or — more selfishly and closer to home — Francisco Park.

If you could change one state or local law, what would it be? Single-payer health care.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it? It's pasta, and probably at Delfina. It would be very tough to decide.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood? Looking down Hyde Street toward the Bay and Alcatraz while a cable car is letting off passengers at the corner of Lombard and Hyde.
Best cultural event/festival to get to know San Jose?

Best San Jose Jazz Summer Fest is a multicultural festival that takes advantage of our numerous plazas and parks, trails and greenbeltways running throughout its 170 square miles.

What civic project or initiative brings you the most hope for the future?

The redevelopment of Diridon Station and the area around it. Its culmination will be much more than simply one project. Success relies on high-speed rail, a new BART extension that connects with Caltrain and the airport, and significant redevelopment. When completed, it will increase the size of our downtown and form a tremendous new hub within it.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it?

Pasta Moon in Half Moon Bay, with cocktails at Moss Area. What is it?

Best cultural event/festival to get to know San Jose?

Best San Jose Jazz Summer Fest is a multicultural festival that takes advantage of our numerous plazas and parks, trails and greenbeltways running throughout its 170 square miles.

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Molly Turner
Lecturer
UC Berkeley Haas School of Business
San Francisco Board, SPUR

Favorite way to get around San Francisco?
On my own two feet! I walk almost everywhere.

Best cultural event/festival to get to know the city?
Rick Prelinger's film series Lost Landscapes of San Francisco.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be?
A second rail tunnel crossing the Bay.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it?
Gordo's in South Berkeley. I grew up on those carnitas burritos. The food, the staff and the decor haven't changed one bit since I was a teenager. They've all gotten more seasoned with age.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood?
Dubo Park. It's a place where neighbors are brought together — willingly or not — by playing dogs, playing children, basketball, barbecues, beer, pot and public transit.
Joshua Simon
Executive Director
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC)
Oakland Board, SPUR

Best cultural event/festival to get to know Oakland? Oakland's First Friday/Art Murmur (accessible from the 19th Street BART Station).

You gaze into the future and see Oakland 50 years from now. What does it look like?
Oakland will be a model for diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods, comprised of mixed-use hubs that foster equity. EBALDC sees these hubs as the realization of “opportunity-based housing,” which connects low-income residents to employment, education, fresh foods and recreational resources.

If you could wave a magic wand and have one major infrastructure project completed tomorrow, what would it be?
The creation of a network of emergency housing facilities to house and assist the thousands of homeless engaged in cleaning up our freeways.

If you could change one state or local law, what would it be?
Costa-Hawkins. Without a form of rent stabilization to slow our rapidly increasing levels of inequality in the Bay Area, we cannot build fast enough to prevent our region from becoming an exclusive area that requires us to spend our time commuting from great distances instead of spending time with our families.

You get one choice for your last meal in the Bay Area. What is it?
I would go to Swan's Market and order hamachi kama from B-Dama, a taco from Cosecha, a salad and wine from The Cook and Her Farmer, plants from Miss Ollie's and fresh juice from Super Juiced.

What one thing embodies the spirit of your neighborhood?
The Oakland Museum of California, which is deeply engaged in connecting the full range of community activities, and, Swan’s Market, which is celebrating 100 years of bringing our community together.

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