

Mick Winter  
Napa Valley Life Magazine  
August-September 2008

## **Through a Glass Greenly** **Viewing the Napa Valley's Quite Possible Future**

Many of us are unaware of the possible effects of declining worldwide oil and natural gas production, climate change, and economic uncertainty on our everyday lives. However, these effects can happen whether we expect them or not. Here are some predictions—both optimistic and pessimistic—that we might see take place by 2010.

### **Potholes**

Good News: Repair and resurfacing of many streets will no longer be delayed.

Bad News: Repair and resurfacing of many streets will simply be cancelled.

Comments: Cities and county will have to conduct triage for streets and roads. With the ever-increasing price of asphalt—up 25% over last year—resurfacing of many streets will no longer be affordable. In some parts of the country, municipalities are already using asphalt grinders to return road surfaces to permanent gravel.

### **Walkable Shopping**

Good News: There will be a convenient mini-store in every neighborhood for basic food and household items.

Bad News: The store will be in what was once someone's home before it was foreclosed.

### **Walkable Cafe/Coffee House**

Good News: There will be a small cafe/coffee house/neighborhood hangout in every neighborhood.

Bad News: This business will be in yet another foreclosed home.

### **Free Water**

Good News: Many homes will have a new source of free, fresh water.

Bad News: People will have to catch their rainwater in barrels and cisterns to get it.

### **Clothes Drying**

Good News: Many people will be using cost-free, unmetered dryers for their laundry.

Bad News: These unmetered dryers will use solar energy and are called “clotheslines”.

Comments: Clotheslines are currently prohibited by most private home associations in California and in front yards by many cities.

### **Fresh Vegetables**

Good News: People will have access to fresh, low-cost, great tasting vegetables.

Bad News: People will have to work in a garden to get them.

Comments: Backyard, neighborhood and community gardens will become not just popular, but essential.

### **Low-quality Imports**

Good News: There will be fewer low-cost goods made in foreign factories that take jobs away from Americans.

Bad News: There will be no replacements for those goods. Or the jobs.

### **Chain Stores**

Good News: There will be fewer low-wage chain stores.

Bad News: There will also be fewer *high*-wage locally-owned stores.

Comments: At the most, there may be only one store left out of the current one Wal-Mart and two Targets in Napa. Small stores driven out of business by the chains will not reappear.

### **Bicycles**

Good News: There will be many people getting healthier by riding bicycles.

Bad News: They'll be riding bicycles because they can no longer afford to drive a car.

### **Car Pooling**

Good News: Car pooling will increase, particularly among neighbors.

Bad News: It's either carpooling or walk.

### **Downtown Housing**

Good News: Napa will finally have "mixed-use" downtown. A number of people will be living in the downtown area close to shops and restaurants.

Bad News: These housing facilities will produce less tax money for the city than when they were called "hotels".

Comments: Those people living downtown will primarily be couples and families who lost their homes due to foreclosure and are living in temporary quarters. Others will include homeless singles living in Single Residency Occupancy facilities.

### **Teen Recreation**

Good News: A newly renovated facility for teenagers will provide ice and roller skating rinks, an alcohol-free nightclub and more.

Bad News: The facility was formerly called Copia.

### **Movie Theaters**

Good News: Theaters showing art, foreign and independent films will finally open in Napa.

Bad News: The classic Art-Deco Uptown Theater will be divided into four separate, small theaters.

### **Restaurants**

Good News: Many restaurants will offer low-priced items on their menus.

Bad News: The rest will have closed.

### **Homes**

Good News: The cost of buying a home will drop significantly.

Bad News: So will wages, bank account balances, and the number of employed people.

Comments: There will continue to be a significant number of home foreclosures. Unoccupied homes will become a crime and health problem and seriously affect remaining neighborhood property values.

### **Public Transit**

Good News: Many people will want to ride public transit.

Bad News: Due to increased fuel costs, higher fares will keep actual ridership increases low.

Comments: Jitneys, autorickshaws and other grassroots transportation will become popular.

### **Railroad**

Good News: Everyone (even St. Helena) will be in favor of a passenger railroad running from Vallejo to Calistoga.

Bad News: There will no longer be money available for such a project.

### **Airport Transportation**

Good News: Most people will no longer complain about the cost of the airport shuttle service.

Bad News: Most people will no longer be flying.

Comments: Due to the high cost of flying on the few remaining airlines, air travel will be done mainly by the wealthy and those who must make essential flights.

### **Gasoline Costs**

Good News: Many people will find their monthly gasoline costs are decreasing.

Bad News: Their gas costs will be decreasing because their miles driven will be decreasing faster than the price of gas increases.

Comments: Gas at \$8 and higher per gallon will cause many people to stop driving except when absolutely necessary.

### **Weight**

Good News: People will lose weight.

Bad News: People will lose weight because they can't afford to continue their current food intake.

### **Trolleys**

Good News: The City of Napa will recognize that an electric streetcar system would be a cost-effective, popular and reliable transportation system for its community.

Bad News: So will hundreds of other towns around the country, all competing at the same time as Napa for federal grants.

### **Federal Government**

Good News: A new administration will officially recognize climate change, energy, and financial crises.

Bad News: Because of the inaction of previous administrations, there will be little time or money left to mitigate the results of these crises.

### **Traffic Congestion**

Good News: Rush hour traffic will decline dramatically.

Bad News: It will decline because more and more people won't have jobs to rush to, or can't afford the gas to do it.

### **Tourism**

Good News: Locals will see fewer tourist problems.

Bad News: Locals will see fewer tourists.

Comments: Far fewer tourists will be visiting and spending money in the valley. Local businesses will close, jobs will be lost.

### **Energy**

Good News: People will become aware of the need to conserve energy.

Bad News: But only when their monthly PGE bill is almost as high as their monthly housing costs.

### **Trucks on Highways**

Good News: Trucks will no longer clog highway lanes.

Bad News: Most independent and many large trucking companies will be out of business.

### **Urban Sprawl**

Good News: The construction of new developments on scenic land will greatly decrease.

Bad News (maybe): Many developers will no longer be in business.

Comments: Their employees and contractors will be out of work, and companies that provide road construction, home furnishings, utilities and other goods and services will go out of business.

But perhaps I'm wrong.

Mick Winter is the author of *Peak Oil Prep: Prepare for Peak Oil, Climate Change and Economic Collapse*, available at [www.peakoilprep.com](http://www.peakoilprep.com).