

# Pictures of a Gone City

## Tech and the Dark Side of Prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area

**Richard A. Walker**

The San Francisco Bay Area is currently the jewel in the crown of capitalism—the tech capital of the world and a gusher of wealth from the Silicon Gold Rush. It has been generating jobs, spawning new innovation, and spreading ideas that are changing lives everywhere. It boasts of being the Left Coast, the Greenest City, and the best place for workers in the USA. So what could be wrong? It may seem that the Bay Area has the best of it in Trump's America, but there is a dark side of success: overheated bubbles and spectacular crashes; exploding inequality and millions of underpaid workers; a boiling housing crisis, mass displacement, and severe environmental damage; a delusional tech elite and complicity with the worst in American politics.

This sweeping account of the Bay Area in the age of the tech boom covers many bases. It begins with the phenomenal concentration of IT in Greater Silicon Valley, the resulting growth in start-ups, jobs, and output, and the unbelievable wealth at the top generated by the local economy. This is followed by a look at the new working class of color, the millions earning poverty wages, and the struggles unleashed to improve their lot. The middle chapters survey the urban scene, starting with the housing bubble that made San Francisco the most expensive city in the U.S., and ending with the exploding metropolis now reaching a hundred miles in every direction. The final chapters take on the political questions raised by the environmental impact of the boom, the fantastical ideology of *TechWorld*, and the tech-led transformation of the region.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

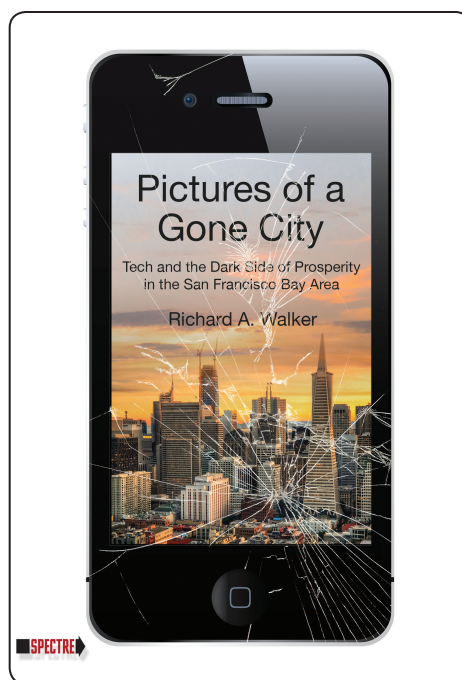
**Richard A. Walker** is professor emeritus of geography at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught from 1975 to 2012. Walker has written on a diverse range of topics in economic, urban, and environmental geography, with scores of published articles to his credit. He is coauthor of *The Capitalist Imperative* (1989) and *The New Social Economy* (1992) and has written extensively on California, including *The Conquest of Bread* (2004), *The Country in the City* (2007) and *The Atlas of California* (2013).

Walker is currently director of the Living New Deal Project, whose purpose is to inventory all New Deal public works sites in the United States and recover the lost memory of government investment for the good of all. Walker now splits time between Berkeley and Burgundy.

### ACCOLADES

"San Francisco has battened from its birth on instant wealth, high tech weaponry, and global commerce, and the present age is little different. Gold, silver, and sleek iPhones—they all glitter in the California sun and are at least as magnetic as the city's spectacular setting, benign climate, and laissez-faire lifestyles. The cast of characters changes, but the hustlers and thought-shapers eternally reign over the city and its hinterland, while in their wake they leave a ruined landscape of exorbitant housing, suburban sprawl, traffic paralysis, and delusional ideas about a market free enough to rob the majority of their freedom. Read all about it here, and weep."

—Gray Brechin, author of *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*



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