SDSU professor discusses land-use choices in San Diego

San Diego State University professor Bruce Appleyard (standing) with several of his researchers in his classroom.

(Editor's note: The Daily Transcript's social media intern Abdul-Jabbar Mohamoud recently interviewed Bruce Appleyard, professor of city planning at San Diego State University. The two talked about the proposed redevelopment of Seaport Village, San Diego's bicycle culture, and the idea of gentrification.):

"I teach the urban design studio, and I am familiar with the people working on the [Seaport Village] design plan. The area is prime property, and I think there are things that need to be done to make it a little more interactive and fit a lot more needs than the area is serving right now. I understand there is a beach area — and beach access is always tough — and to have it so close to an urban area can be really special."

Appleyard discussed what the city must do to get more people to use bicycles for transportation.

"We have a lot of nice, bicycle-friendly areas, but [they] are isolated from one another due to freeways and grade changes. We need to bridge those gaps. We are a relatively freeway-rich area ... it takes minutes from almost anywhere to find a freeway. So, we've got to design things, so those with a car can drive at more humane speeds and allow bicycles. We need to put in more bike lanes — protected bike lanes — as well as bike bridges to connect different parts of the city. We have the weather here, where a majority of the time there is no excuse to not bike."

Appleyard's father, Donald Appleyard, is an urban design professor, and he, with fellow urban designer Kevin Lynch, created a vision plan for San Diego in 1974. The pair called it "temporary paradise," asking whether San Diego is a kind of utopia.

"San Diego does have aspects of a paradise. The great weather and great landscape, but I would say it needs to be a hopeful and equitable paradise. If we talk about utopia, the question then becomes, 'Utopia for who?' With San Diego we need to think about housing, and something I created, which is 'livability ethics.' One group's pursuit of livability does not rule out others.

"It is troubling to see people in the Clairemont area fighting the development of the Midcoast Trolley Line, limiting access for others. Housing in accessible locations is important. We need to have conversations with those who live in the areas near the Midcoast Trolley. We need to provide access to different parts of the city for everyone through public transport."

Appleyard said cities must do a better job of building housing around transit stations to provide residents with access to the rest of the region.

"What we learned in San Francisco, in particular, is that a lot of this opposition is those who say, 'Not in my backyard,' and it's a covert form of discrimination. When people sometimes say we want to fight this development, they are actually fighting [to prevent] others access to that area. We need to have really honest conversations about that and build more housing in these accessible areas. Overall, having suitable and accessible housing helps everybody out."