Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

If any of you subscribed because of Rod Dreher, you are in the wrong place. Email me and I can help you get it sorted.

I have been writing about the future of colleges lately and also spent some time recently in a couple of college towns, Bloomington, Indiana (where I went to school) and Charlottesville, Virginia.

If you ask people about the reputations of Big Ten college towns, the two names that always pop up are Madison and Ann Arbor. Madison is truly a great place. It has an amazing physical setting, the university, and it's the state capital. It's also full of great stores shops like Context Clothing and Candinas Chocolatier (two of my faves). Ann Arbor, by contrast, just isn't that impressive. It's not bad, but I find the idea that this is one of America's great college towns ridiculous. Bloomington is way better. (So is Charlottesville). But the University of Michigan, of course, is one of America's great public universities, clearly the best in the Big Ten. It's the reputation of U of M that drives the reputation of the town much moreso than the town's own qualities.

When two things are tightly linked together, like a town and its school, the reputation of one affects the other. In the case of Bloomington, the town probably deserves a better reputation than it has. Part of accomplishing that is to build up the school. But the school also needs to better leverage the town. Bloomington is an under-performer in the marketplace from a brand value perspective, and local leaders should work on that.

Charlottesville is an interesting place. I probably shared my observations on it last year. It's traditionally had a good reputation in part because UVa is another one of the "Public Ivies." But it's an untraditional college town in that it's very posh. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe all lived there, so presumably it's always been somewhat aristocratic.

What was different this trip is that it was after the Nazi rally. It was kind of surreal to be there. The mall was bustling with upscale activity right where someone was killed. Much as with towns and their schools, the link between this rally and the town will affect the latter. "Charlottesville" is now nationally essentially a metonym for that rally. Though it may not affect the city directly, this is a linkage that is not soon going away. A plan for a 1970s Nazi march in Skokie, Illinois is still the first and only thing some people think of when they hear the name of the city - despite the fact that Skokie itself didn't have any Nazis but was instead chosen for the march (which actually ended up taking place in Chicago) because it was home to many Holocaust survivors.

Culture

Om Malik: [SEC vs Theranos & what it means for Silicon Valley](#)

Ousting of Holmes is an unprecedented step taken by the SEC against a private (and not public) technology company, and is a watershed moment in the history of Silicon Valley. It does not come as a surprise to me that the grim reaper of regulation is walking around in Silicon Valley. The notional values of startups are exceeding those of their public market peers, and a lot of those valuations are based on financial foundations weaker than those of a dollhouse. And what SEC seems to be saying — if you are going to play with the big boys, then you will be monitored like big boys. All those who have been wearing the "unicorn" badge need to make sure that their numbers are right — the I's dotted and T's crossed.

Longreads: [The Billionaire Philanthropist](#)

Tech Crunch: [#deletefacebook](#)

WSJ: [For Some Class-Action Lawyers, Charity Begins and Ends at Home](#)

International

Lionel Shriver: [Why mass immigration explains the housing crisis](#) - I don't know if I'd go that far, but clearly in a city like New York where around a third of the population is foreign born, immigration clearly plays a role in filling up the limited housing supply.

WSJ: [New tech centers sprout in Europe](#)

The Guardian: [The dysfunctional megacity: why Dhaka is bursting at the sewers](#)

Urbanism

The Atlantic: [School choice may be accelerating gentrification](#) - "The ability to opt out of a neighborhood school increases the likelihood that a black or Hispanic neighborhood will see an influx of wealthier residents."

Jason Segedy: [Rust Belt Cities Need Investment, Not Gentrification Worries](#)

The Planning Report: [Squaring Urbanism & Density](#)

Some believe that 21st century density should be linear. That's the model of authorizing density within a certain perimeter around a transit corridor. This image of LA is one of densifying our thoroughfares and leaving our other neighborhoods with low density. Personally, I don't think that's good urbanism, nor is it economically or spatially efficient. The benefits of density come from density clusters, not from density corridors. Stringing density out is a terrible idea from the standpoints of design, placemaking, sociability, and aesthetics; what we need is something more like a forest.

WSJ: [The Next Housing Crisis: A Historic Shortage of New Homes](#) - In part new regulations and higher development standards need to be seen in the context of the housing crash and fiscal pressures. These very low end vinyl villages won't last and don't generate enough tax revenue to support services the residents require. Part of controlling sprawl is to fully internalize the costs of expansion into the price, so higher prices and less construction are really almost inevitable.

NYT: [Why Outer Suburbs in the East and Midwest Have Stopped Booming](#)

LA Times: [Buying a Bay Area home is now a stretch even for Apple and Google engineers](#) - on the other hand, not all regulation is great to be sure. "Buying a Bay Area home is now a stretch even for Apple and Google engineers"

Stat Chat: [Is population decline bad?](#)

Pete Saunders: [Why Cities Should Value Their Brands, Just As Businesses Do](#)

SF Chronicle: [Breaking down San Francisco's car break-in epidemic](#) - "Car break-ins hit a historic high in San Francisco last year, reaching 31,122 reported incidents."

San Francisco Magazine: [Can big tech be tamed?](#)

In San Francisco, because of extremely high labor expenses and thickets of regulations, it costs between $550,000 and $850,000 to build one unit of subsidized housing....Since the 1960s, anti-growth progressives have held the de facto moral high ground in liberal cities like San Francisco. Their default position is that the laws of supply and demand don't really apply here, because demand is so high that no matter how much market-rate housing we build, we'll never significantly cut housing costs. Therefore, any housing development that doesn't include some unspecified but not-subject-to-the-laws-of-capitalism percentage of subsidized housing (100 percent has been proposed) should be rejected. Same goes for changing neighborhood zoning to allow for more apartment buildings instead of single-family homes. The result of these passionately held beliefs is predictable and consistent: Nothing gets built.

WSJ: [San Francisco has a people problem](#)

Bloomberg: [Why Charlotte and Raleigh work for black residents](#)

Buzzfeed: [How Nashville Became One Big Bachelorette Party](#)

NYT: [How One Houston Suburb Ended Up in a Reservoir](#)

Transportation

WSJ: [Train Buffs Are Traveling Cross-Country in Super Luxe Railcars Hitched to Amtrak Trains](#)

The American Conservative: [Why St. Louis built a streetcar to nowhere](#)

Cleveland Scene: [Lies, Damn Lies and the 450 Acres of Prime Real Estate That is Burke Lakefront Airport](#) - "the three airports in Cuyahoga County had 497,397 takeoffs and landings in 2000 and 181,069 in 2017"

Governing: [More Poorer Residents Are Driving Cars, Presenting New Issues for Transit Agencies](#)

WSJ: [Airlines Know You Hate the Airport, and Are Trying to Do Something About It](#)