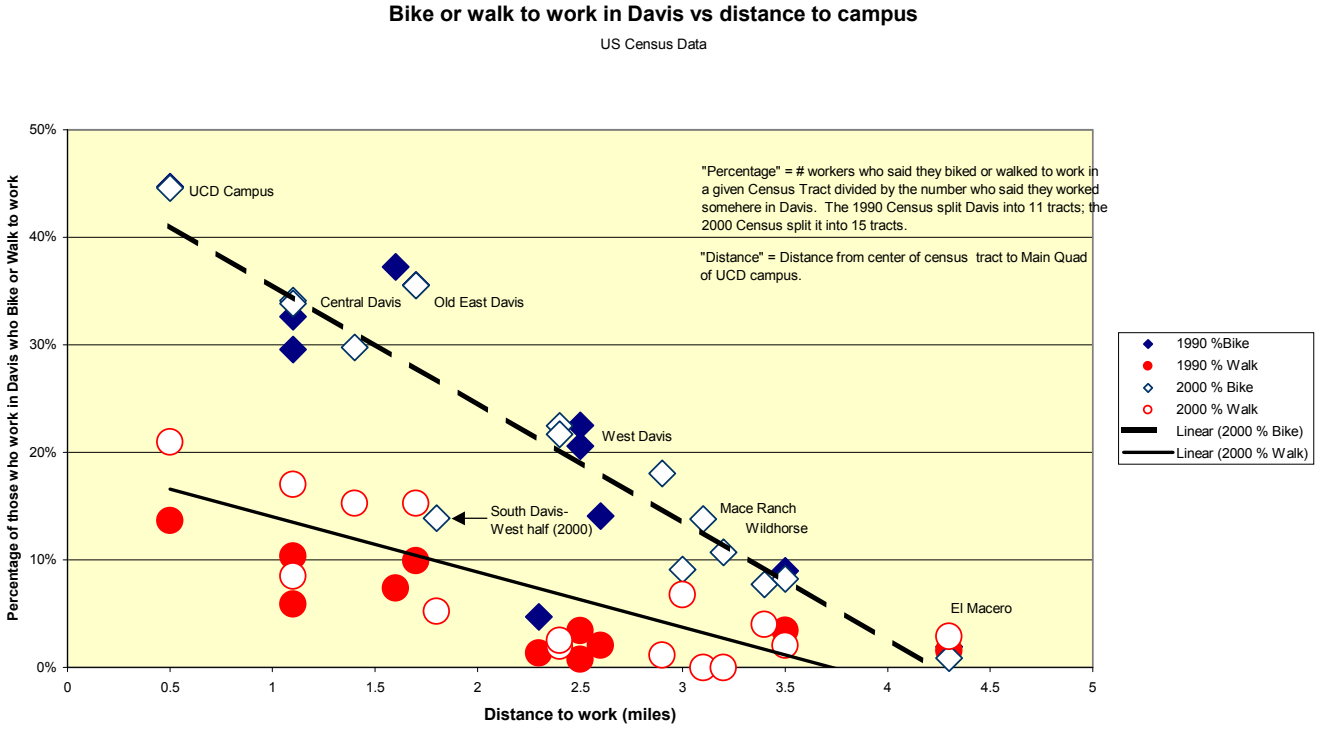
Transportation and Energy Use in Davis

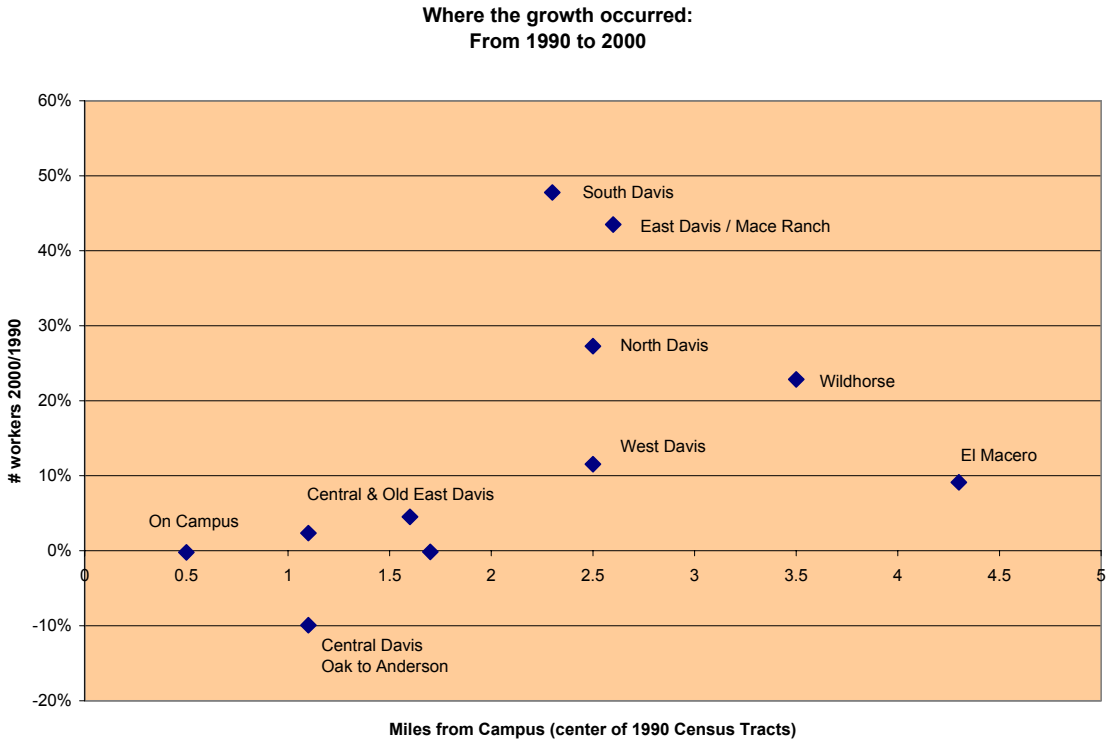
Informational handout to the City of Davis Energy Task Force
Z Smith - 1/16/04

The Sunday *Enterprise* of 11/16/03 carried an intriguing piece titled "Is Davis' top-rated bike culture starting to backpedal?" It reported that U.S. Census figures show that the percentage of workers living in Davis who bicycle to work has dropped from 22% in 1990 to 14% in 2000. Some of those interviewed thought the problem was a change in people's attitudes, and proposed public education programs as the solution.

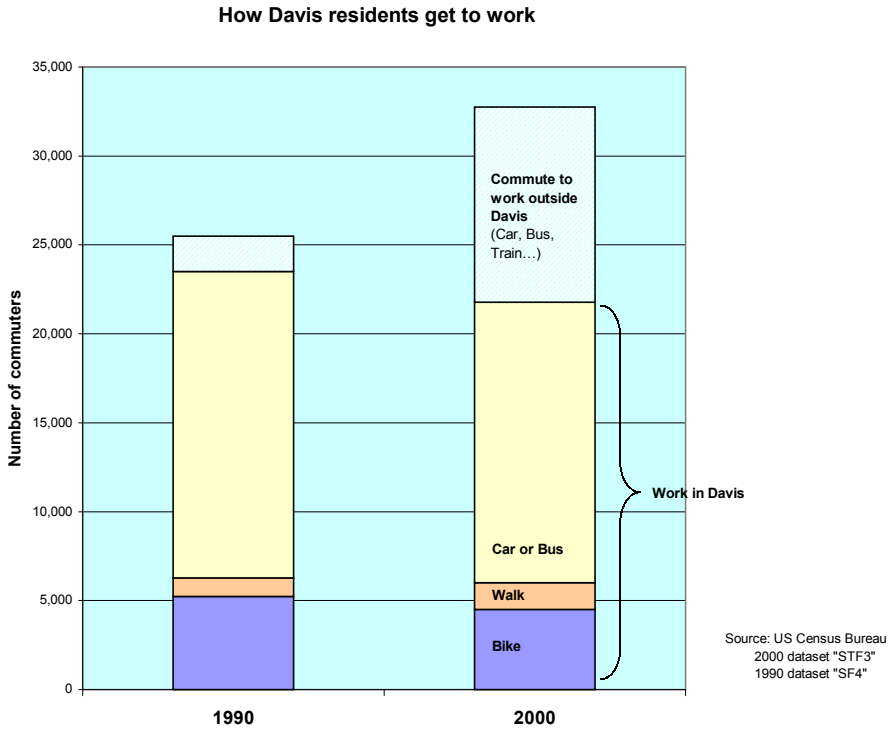
However, you get a very different picture if you go to the Census Department website, download the data for Davis, and look at how people get to work versus where they work and where they live. As you'd expect, the farther you have to go, the less likely it is you'll bike. The census data show the following:

1. If you work in Davis, you're just as likely to bike or walk to work now as you were 10 years ago, neighborhood by neighborhood.
2. What matters is how far you live from our biggest employer—UCD. In the census tracts within a mile or so of campus, 30-35% of those working in Davis bike to work, and 10-15% walk. In the census tracts 3 miles from campus (Mace Ranch, Wildhorse, El Macero), less than 8% bike and 2% walk. These numbers held *the same* between 1990 and 2000.



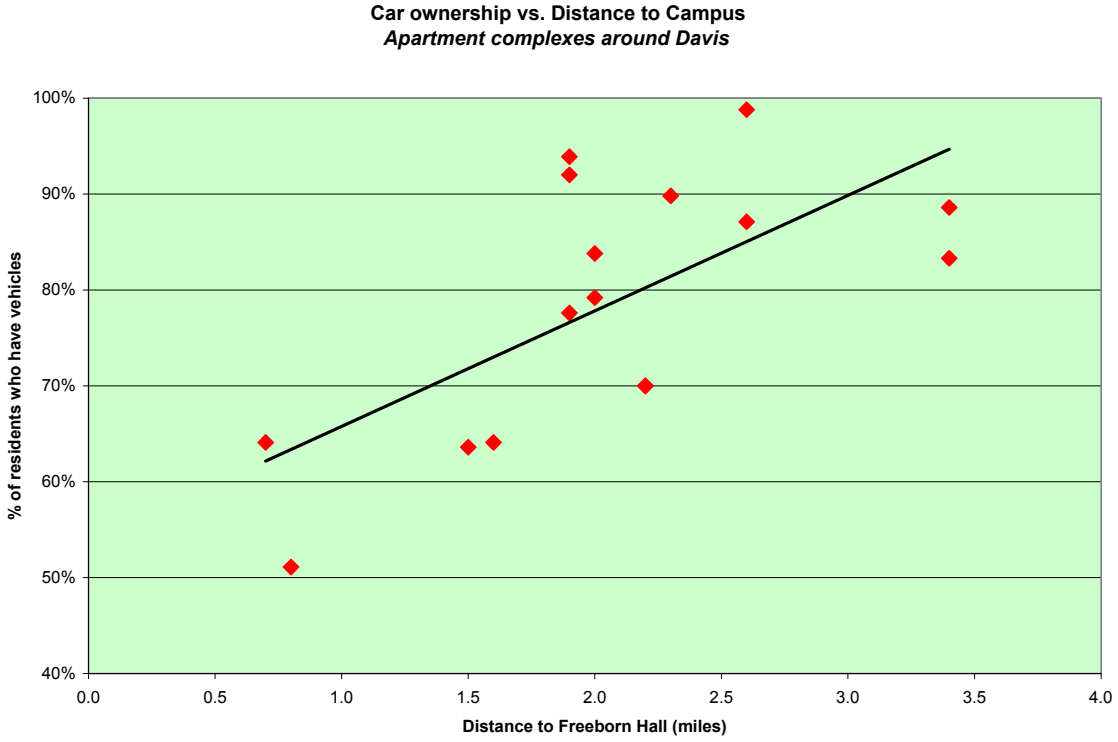


3. What *has* changed, of course, is that most of the new housing in town has been built out on the periphery, far from campus.
4. Compounding the effect is the fact that over half of the workers living in these outlying neighborhoods work outside of Davis, vs. 20% for the neighborhoods close to campus. Citywide, we've gone from 8% commuting out of town in



1990 to more than 30% in 2000. These commuters get to work almost entirely by car.

All this has energy implications. For the typical Davis household:

Type of Energy Use	**Annual use, normal measure**	**Equivalent BTUs**
Electric use	5356 kWh	25 MBTU
Natural Gas	434 therms	43 MBTU
Gas for 1 car, 11,000 miles @ 25 MPG	480 gallons	57 MBTU

From a policy perspective, this means that if Davis wishes to accommodate university-related while minimizing growth in traffic, energy use, or pollution, it needs to promote more housing close to campus and downtown, and promote housing for students and those who work in town. In infill projects, this may mean recognizing the fact (as has already been documented in materials included by the Planning Department in the City Council packet 7/24/02) that residents of apartment complexes closer to the campus own far fewer cars than those who live at the edge of town (50% vs 90%), and translating this into reduce parking requirements for housing aimed at students and staff that are closer to campus. This would allow more room for people instead of parking lots.