

## Council president Steve Brandau catches heat for op-ed column on Fresno growth plan

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Fresno City Council President Steve Brandau sits at the dais during the Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014 council meeting with a six-pack of pansies. In response to a comment Brandau made in The Bee equating some naysayers to “pansies,” Gazebo Gardens Nursery gave away pansies to any resident who promised to take them to the meeting.

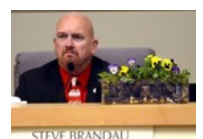
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Steve Brandau, president of the Fresno City Council, is being criticized for parts of an [opinion column](#) he wrote for The Bee about Fresno’s 2035 general plan, the city’s blueprint for development and growth.

The most eyebrow-raising passage in the column, published Monday (emphasis ours):

*It is now popular in California for public policy to be made on the whimsical notions of the “intellectual elite.” They live*



off high six-figure salaries and **have less common sense than the average Walmart clerk**.

SW Parra, The Bee's editorial cartoonist, [took flight with Brandau's Walmart reference](#). The Bee's Joshua Tehee [weighed in on the Beehive blog](#). And [The Bee's Editorial Board](#) took exception with Brandau's stance on the general plan (A key passage: *"It's obvious Brandau has swallowed the developer's Kool-Aid."*)

Brandau writes that Fresno's proposed general plan "would be more at home in Sacramento or San Francisco." He recalls a League of Cities meeting he attended in which the keynote said: "I don't even own a car!" The council president then says (again, emphasis ours):

*We have invested \$1.16 billion in the Fresno metropolitan area to make traveling around extremely easy. Now we are supposed to forsake that investment because **some pansy in Sacramento** thinks we need to live closer together and ride the bus?*

Brandau's column triggered a sharp reaction among [letter writers to The Bee's Opinion section](#). A sampling:

*Brandau goes on to say that anyone suggesting a Fresno with a stronger inner-city, better public transit, and greater density is a "pansy." [This type of exaggerated masculine politics](#) is unneeded, and frankly immature. — **Michell Roberts***

*[Brandau has it backward](#). The plan is a democratic community's effort to influence the hand of the free market through good government, not "government to force its schemes upon the community. — **Larry W. Taylor***

*That (Brandau) makes his case in an op-ed rant, rife with insults and mean-spirited slurs, [only increases the desire to flee \(Fresno\)](#). — **Jill Fisher***

Meanwhile, the owners of Gazebo Gardens Nursery [posted a special offer](#): a free 6-pack of pansies to anyone who promises to take them to the council meeting.

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