

American River Parkway Preservation Society

Annual Organizational Report #20

October 1, 2022- September 30, 2023

Mission

Preserve, Protect, and Strengthen the American River Parkway, Our Community's Natural Heart.

Vision

We want our Parkway, seven generations from now, to be a vibrant, accessible, and serene sanctuary, nourishing and refreshing the spirit of all who enter it.

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American River Parkway Preservation Society
Organizational Leadership

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Marcos Breton, Columnist Sacramento Bee Newspaper

Introduction

This year has been, unfortunately, too much like last year—bad for the Parkway—with the one bright spot the action of the District Attorney, which is noted in these two articles, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article282690253.html#storylink=cpy> and [Sacramento DA Accuses City of Allowing Homeless Vagrants to Pollute Rivers – California Globe](#)

So, while there has been some change in terms of the problem—increased and devastating illegal camping in the Parkway by the homeless—little has changed in terms of solutions; still the same unenforced solutions from public leadership with no concrete actions to restore the Parkway to a semblance of its status some years ago as the Jewel of Sacramento.

Indeed, as noted by the American River Parkway Foundation—the organization with the most boots on the ground due to its regular cleanups and office location in the Parkway—the amount of homeless illegally camping in the Parkway has grown into the thousands, as they reported:

“Illegal camping has been a growing issue for the American River Parkway. Now, with 2,000-3,000 illegal campers, the impact is going to be felt for years to come. “There is an environmental crisis on the Parkway with habitat destruction from fires, soil compaction, interruption of wildlife behaviors and decline in water quality. There is also a humanitarian crisis with unhoused living among trash and waste, leading to exposure to more disease.” Retrieved September 30, 2022 from [Addressing Illegal Camping on the Parkway - American River Parkway Foundation \(arpf.org\)](#)

This is obviously extremely harmful to the Parkway. However, we believe most people in public leadership have good intentions and will ultimately come to pursue the correct course to ensure our Parkway is protected and enhanced. Meanwhile we will continue to advocate for our policy issues, which are posted on our website at ARPPS – Strategy

Unfortunately, there does not exist a well-established advocacy community for helping the Parkway—though the American River Parkway Foundation seems to be stepping up and has produced an excellent video, the *Parkway in Peril*, available at [Parkway in Peril - YouTube](#) as well as a discussion at [Parkway in Peril & Panel Discussion - FB Live Stream - YouTube](#)—as there exists for that which hurts it; but that will not curtail our efforts as we knew from our beginning in 2003 that this was to be a long struggle as protecting the Commons has always been.

The model we have suggested is management by a nonprofit organization contracted to a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) of the Parkway adjacent county and cities: Sacramento County, Sacramento City, Rancho Cordova, and Folsom.

To help create an environment where the nonprofit policy concept we have presented becomes accepted public policy it is important to provide information about successful adaptations of the concept to other public parks in the nation.

We initially thought having the JPA—made up of local leadership of the Parkway adjacent county and cities—provide the daily management, but soon realized that would be too much impacted by whatever current political forces ascendent at the time.

The advantage of a nonprofit organization providing the daily management—as our model the Central Park Conservancy (CPC) does—while contracted with local government, in our case the JPA.

Here is how CPC is described in Wikipedia:

The **Central Park Conservancy** is a private, [nonprofit park conservancy](#) that manages [Central Park](#) under a contract with the [City of New York](#) and [NYC Parks](#). The conservancy employs most maintenance and operations staff in the park. It effectively oversees the work of both the private and public employees under the authority of the publicly appointed Central Park administrator, who reports to the parks commissioner and the conservancy's president.

The Central Park Conservancy was founded in 1980 in the aftermath of Central Park's decline in the 1960s and 1970s. Initially devoted to fundraising for projects to restore and improve the park, it took over the park's management duties in 1998. The organization has invested more than \$800 million toward the restoration and enhancement of Central Park since its founding. With an endowment of over \$200 million, consisting of contributions from residents, corporations, and foundations, the Conservancy provides 75 percent of the Park's \$65 million annual operating budget and is responsible for all basic care of the park. The Conservancy also provides maintenance support and staff training programs for other public parks in New York City, and has assisted with the development of new parks, such as the [High Line](#) and [Brooklyn Bridge Park](#).

Retrieved October 5, 2020 from
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Park_Conservancy

CPC struggled to convince the city of New York that its suggested public-private park administration would work, as the founder, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, notes in her book:

Looking back, I realize that the birth of the Central Park Conservancy was essentially a matter of luck and timing. The current unquestioned acceptance of the concept of

public-private park partnerships and the cooperative alliance between New York City government and the Conservancy today makes it hard for us to believe the degree of resistance to its creation in the first place. The proposal to form an official working partnership between city government and a group of private citizens was viewed warily and would probably not have been accepted at that time by public officials jealous of their authority and reluctant to give up the opportunities that elected office grants when political patronage is the norm. In addition, if the city had not been under duress, the municipal workers union (District Council 37) would have claimed that privately funded employees were usurping the jobs of union men. Even if this were not the case, objections would be raised by residents maintaining that they were taxpayers, ergo the care of parks was a city responsibility. Moreover, some existing not-for-profit park support organizations were questionable. “Private groups should not get in bed with the city,” declared a board member of one, explaining that the role of citizen’s groups was to criticize the policies and practices of public officials and to campaign for reform, not to act as a partner of government. (P. 14)

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers. (2018). *Saving Central Park: A History and a Memoir*. Alfred A. Knopf: New York.

Of course, things have changed substantially since then, as witnessed by the number of public-private partnerships that have arisen since then and here are two examples:

One is the Emerald Necklace Conservancy in Boston which describes its Vision:

Vision

In its role as a steward of Frederick Law Olmsted’s 100-year old park system, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy will be seen as a trusted collaborator working seamlessly with its public partners to restore, improve, maintain, and protect this iconic urban landscape. This work will be visible to all and recognized nationally for setting standards of excellence and creating best practices in preservation, advocacy, education, conservation, programming, safety, sustainability and park administration.

Retrieved October 9, 2020 from <https://www.emeraldnecklace.org/about-us/>

Two is the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy:

The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy was founded in December 1996 by a group of citizens concerned with the deteriorating conditions of Pittsburgh's historic city parks.

A nonprofit organization, the Parks Conservancy has worked closely with the City of Pittsburgh since 1998 under an official public interest partnership agreement to restore the city's parks.

To date, the Parks Conservancy has raised nearly \$130 million for parks and has completed 22 major improvement projects. Currently active in 22 of the city's 165 parks, the Parks Conservancy has expanded into community and neighborhood parks throughout Pittsburgh.

Retrieved October 9, 2020 from <https://www.pittsburghparks.org/theconservancy>

The Parkway has the potential to become as strongly supported by its community as CPC now is, but not under the current management.

Public Communication & Education

Weblog

ARPPS posts regularly and maintains a public daily (on weekdays only) weblog at <http://riverparkwayblog.wordpress.com/> .

During our last program year, from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, we posted 135 times—we only post on weekdays—curated articles, reports, news items, and event information connected to our mission.

E-Letters/Newsletters

ARPPS ensures that all public leadership with some form of public participation in Parkway related issues receives our monthly e-letters and quarterly newsletters, as well as press releases, research reports, policy briefings and position paper.

The American River Parkway Preservation Society Strategy & Implementation

*Preserve, Protect & Strengthen the American River Parkway
For as Long as The River Runs Through It
2020 – 2025*

Introduction

The leadership in our community has a responsibility to create a vision that preserves, protects and strengthens the treasured resource of the American River Parkway in perpetuity.

We have invested twenty years—since our organization was founded in 2003— pursuing a strategy of organizational capacity building and conducting research in the practical approaches, emanating from our guiding principles, we've determined can address the critical issues impacting the Parkway, and communicating with our members and the public those results.

Six Critical Issues & Corresponding Guiding Principles

1) Continuing depletion of public funding to provide vital ongoing maintenance, facility repair, law enforcement presence, invasive plant management, and fully restore a sense of safety for those using our priceless public resource.

Our Guiding Principle: Preserving the Parkway is not an option, it's a necessity.

2) Continuing pressure on the river, whether through flooding, illegal sewage discharge, or taking water for new development, hurts the salmon and other aquatic life.

Our Guiding Principle: What's good for the salmon is good for the river.

3) Continuing habitat devastation, fires, and pollution from widespread illegal camping by the homeless, primarily in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway.

Our Guiding Principle: Regarding illegal camping by the homeless in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway: Social and environmental justice calls upon us to help the poor and distressed person but not at the expense of the adjacent community to visit the Parkway safely.

4) Continuing development pressure to build large homes along the Parkway edges, intruding on the view space, and encroaching into the commons.

Our Guiding Principle: If it can be seen from the Parkway, it shouldn't be built along the Parkway.

5) Continuing exclusion of responsible usage by new Parkway user groups is contrary to the spirit upon which public ownership of a natural resource is predicated.

Our Guiding Principle: Regarding new parkway usages: Inclusion should be the operating principle rather than exclusion.

6) Continuing encasement of open space, restricting suburban community development upon which a sustainable tax base funding necessary public works is built, is contrary to sound future planning.

Our Guiding Principle: The suburban lifestyle—as surrounds the American River Parkway—which is imbued within the aspirational center of the California Dream and whose vision is woven into the heart of the American Dream, is a deeply loved way of life whose sustainability we all desire.

Our fourth strategic plan—designed to guide our work from 2020 to 202—includes retention of a stable membership base of about 700, designation of a parkway advocate when someone emerges (seven individuals have been acknowledged since 2004), and regular communications (letters, articles, daily blogging, monthly e-letters, quarterly newsletters, annual organizational reports and five research reports covering critical issues, and periodic planning position papers).

All of this information is available on our website.

Strategic Summary

We will be investing the current five years in two directions: one major, the other ongoing.

The major work will focus around trying to encourage local government to bring into reality the one idea from our research into approaches that can most significantly impact the major critical issues—funding and management—which is the designation of a nonprofit organization to provide daily management of the Parkway, under contract with a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) consisting of Parkway adjacent governments (Cities of Sacramento, Rancho Cordova & Folsom, and Sacramento County).

The ongoing work will focus on continuing to help build a community knowledge base around the results of our five research reports, buttressed by new information that becomes available.

The American River Parkway is the most valuable natural resource in our community and one of the most valuable in the nation.

Because of this singular nature, it has the potential to be governed through a singular process, a nonprofit organization, as other signature park areas in the country are governed.

This type of governance will give our Parkway the dedicated management and fund raising capability that are so necessary to retain and enhance its premier local and national status.

Implementation Summary

To help in this process, ARPPS Former Executive Director, Kristine Lea, incorporated a nonprofit organization, the American River Parkway Conservancy (ARPC) to serve as an educational forum initially, and eventually, provide daily management for the Parkway.

The ARPC concept was presented to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors on October 6, 2015, however the County went another direction, supporting the transfer of governing authority to a state agency, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, <https://www.wcb.ca.gov/> part of the California Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Even with that development, to help create an environment where the nonprofit policy concept we have presented becomes accepted public policy it is important to provide information about successful adaptations of the concept to other public park areas in the nation, to the public and public leadership through the following venues.

Community Information

- Weekdays Blogging: The Parkway Blog at <http://riverparkwayblog.wordpress.com/> is part of the ongoing work of ARPPS public education and advocacy around public policy issues that may be related to the Parkway and the adjacent communities along the American River in Sacramento, California.
- Monthly & special e-letters to membership and public leadership: We will continue the monthly e letters, with a focus, when possible, on illegal camping in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway and JPA governance.
- Quarterly newsletters to membership and public leadership: We will continue the quarterly newsletters with a focus, when possible, on ARPC management and JPA governance.

- Regular letters to the editor: We will seek opportunities to send letters that focus on ARPC management and JPA governance, Auburn Dam & Illegal camping.
- Occasional articles in local publications: We will seek to have articles published that look at governance by a JPA and ARPC as a viable option for the Parkway.
- Occasional policy planning papers: We will, when possible, cover the viability of Parkway management by ARPC and governance by a JPA.
- Annual Organizational report.

Public Forums

- Presentations to local business and neighborhood organizations: We will seek the opportunity to present information, when appropriate, about JPA governance.
- Meetings with public leadership: We will meet with public leadership, when appropriate, to discuss the option of JPA governance.

Review & Update

This plan is subject to annual review and update every five years.

Strategy: Status Summary

Our Guiding Principles, Critical Issues & Suggested Solutions: Status of Progress

Guiding Principles

- 1) *Preserving the Parkway is not an option, it's a necessity.*
- 2) *What's good for the salmon is good for the river.*
- 3) *Regarding illegal camping by the homeless in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway: Social and environmental justice calls upon us to help the poor and distressed person but not at the expense of the adjacent community to visit the Parkway safely.*
- 4) *If it can be seen from the Parkway, it shouldn't be built along the Parkway.*
- 5) *Regarding new parkway usages: Inclusion should be the operating principle rather than exclusion.*

6) *The suburban lifestyle—as surrounds the American River Parkway—which is imbued within the aspirational center of the California Dream and whose vision is woven into the heart of the American Dream, is a deeply loved way of life whose sustainability we all desire.*

Status: These guiding principles—Number 6 was added in 2011—still animate our work, being prioritized as warranted.

Critical Issues/Solutions

We encourage policy discussions about the Parkway, addressing the five critical issues and our proposed solutions.

1) Continuing depletion of public funding to take care of the Parkway.

Solution: *Create a Joint Powers Authority and nonprofit organization for daily management and fundraising.*

Status: The nonprofit organization, American River Parkway Conservancy, created by ARPPS Executive Director, Kristine Lea, was presented to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors on October 6, 2015 and was rejected.

We continue to advocate for that solution.

2) Continuing pressure on the river, whether through flooding, illegal sewage discharge, or taking water for new development, hurts the salmon and other aquatic life.

Solution: *Build the Auburn Dam.*

Status: On hold, but still a congressionally approved dam site which could be revived by Congress, and the Regional Water Forum sponsored by the Auburn Dam Council in June of 2012 and 2013 was a welcome addition to the public discussion for the need for Auburn Dam.

3) Continuing habitat devastation, fires, and pollution from widespread illegal camping by the homeless in the Lower Reach.

Solution: *Strengthen and enforce laws against illegal camping.*

Status: Sacramento County, as a result of court cases allowing the homeless to camp in public spaces if there are no homeless housing available for them, has essentially given up on this issue for now.

4) Continuing development pressure to build large homes along the Parkway edges, intruding on the view space, and encroaching into the commons.

Solution: *Prohibit such new building.*

Status: The new Parkway Plan strengthened the restrictions.

5) Continuing exclusion of responsible usage by new Parkway user groups is contrary to the spirit upon which public ownership of a natural resource is predicated.

Solution: *Give such groups an opportunity to make their case.*

Status: New groups seeking access to the Parkway, such as dogs-without-leases groups, mountain-bike groups (this group—Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates—finally got approval to develop a trail in the Parkway in the Fall of 2017, <https://sacbike.org/morebikes-on-more-of-the-arp/>), disc-golf groups, mini-train groups, etc. are still finding little opportunity to present their proposals—which almost always includes doing the maintenance and initial set-up themselves—to the Parkway governing agency which has traditionally favored passive recreation over active.

6) Continuing encasement of open space, restricting suburban community development upon which a sustainable tax base funding necessary public works is built, is contrary to sound future planning.

Solution: *Support the growth of suburban communities.*

Status: There is an advocacy element in the Sacramento region which does not support suburban communities, and we shall continue to note that suburban communities are where the majority of people wish to live, and that planning decisions need to reflect this.

Appendix I: Monthly E-Letters

American River Parkway Preservation Society

E-Letter #254, September 4, 2023

Parkway Management

This article is from 2004, but is still, if not more so now, very relevant.

The American River Parkway: A Tarnished Crown Jewel

To the folks living upriver of Discovery Park, Woodlake and Cal Expo, on the American River, the Parkway is the 'crown jewel' of the region, and they continue to insist on the designation.

To the rest of us who live along it and use it, and the Sacramento Bee, the Sacramento Business Journal and the Sacramento News & Review, who have wrote about it, we know the jewel is seriously tarnished.

It has become tarnished by wide-spread illegal camping and the related crimes, many of which are very serious, including murder, rape and assault; that the County Parks Department, the managing entity of most of the Parkway, seems to be unable to stop.

The American River Parkway Preservation Society (ARPPS) was founded last year to educate and help shape public dialogue concerning the dire situation of the Parkway, generally unknown by the public until recently. Our first guiding principle is: ***Preserving the Parkway is not an option, it's a necessity.***

Parkway management, operating on that principle, would ensure the Parkway's survival. It certainly deserves saving, more than most of us know.

We all know how beautiful it is, and how much everyone enjoys the Parkway experience. But did you know it is an economic engine that "generates an estimated \$259,034,030 in annual economic activity in the local economy." (*American River Parkway: Financial Needs Study*. **Dangermond Group**, July 2000), or that Lake Natoma was rated "Best All Round Rowing Facility in North America", by **Rowing News**, in its April 6, 2003 issue, "As an all-around facility, Lake Natoma may be the closest North America comes to a Bled or Lucerne." , or that "The parkway gets a million more visitors than does Yosemite National Park." *Parkway in Peril*, **Sacramento Bee Editorial**, January 2, 2004.

Pretty heady stuff, pretty great Parkway.

Sacramento is the heart of a maturing region and the Parkway is our natural heart. We have big time sports, a vibrant business community, new cities are emerging, we are the most diverse city in the country, open space abounds, and we enjoy a terrific way of life. However, our county government is struggling, and it appears their stewardship of the Parkway may not survive the year.

A solution to consider is establishing a conservancy, an approach already being used successfully in other mature urban areas.

A conservancy is a public nonprofit organization whose sole purpose would be to manage the Parkway and ensure its natural resources are preserved, protected and strengthened for the enjoyment and use of the community. The land remains in public ownership, local governments would dedicate a set annual amount to it, but much of the funding would come from the fundraising done by the conservancy. A successful model is Central Park Conservancy which has brought Central Park back from long term deterioration under similar circumstances.

This option certainly deserves more study, but it appears to offer a solution that doesn't increase taxes or bureaucracy.

The difficulty in having a public agency manage a priceless public resource, during a time of uncertain public funding, is the method of ranking what gets funded. The current public agency managing the Parkway (County Parks) has to balance the Parkway among several other competing funding requests. Then the County Board of Supervisors has to balance the County Parks budget against many other competing Agency budget requests. To help them go through this process during times, (like now), when they have to make cuts, they rely on a ranking process that puts necessities, like public safety, on top. On this basis the Parkway is close to the bottom of the funding list.

An independent nonprofit organization, established exclusively to manage and look out for the Parkway would have no such choices to make. Their mission would be to preserve, protect and strengthen the Parkway for optimal public use and enjoyment, period.

Seeking different governance structures at this point in time, is simply a matter of looking for a more appropriate vehicle to accomplish something we all want.

A 501(c)(3) public benefit nonprofit corporation, acting as a Parkway conservancy organization, seems to fit the bill for our Parkway, and the local resources available to help this come into being are substantial.

There are existing local conservancies that could be involved in helping birth an American River Parkway Conservancy, some of them having raised millions of dollars, and managing thousands of acres of open space. Great expertise is available within the existing Parkway community, Parkway related nonprofit organizations, County Parks staff, public Parkway related boards, commissions, and task forces, as well as other interested stakeholders and community leadership, to create the depth of regional support and excitement for this solution and make it a reality.

Our maturity and vision as a community has been well established throughout our history.

Ever since the cry of “Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River!” went out to the world over a hundred and fifty years ago, we have been within the center of the American Dream’s promise, and fulfillment. The American River Parkway is the great natural heart of our region, a dream of the earth still unfulfilled, but most wonderfully within reach.

(January 19, 2004) David H. Lukenbill, President, American River Parkway Preservation Society (ARPPS) www.arpps.org Published in Inside Arden News Magazine, March 2004

American River Parkway Preservation Society

E-Letter #253, August 13, 2023

Twentieth Anniversary Issue

Founded in 2003, our organization, more than any other Parkway organization, has continued, since our founding, the effort to protect the Parkway from the depredations of the illegal camping of the homeless which local public leadership has—so far—been unable to address effectively.

Here is what we said about this—which was our third mission issue— in the Charter Issue of our Newsletter:

Issue 3: Continuing habitat devastation, fires, and pollution from widespread illegal camping by the homeless, primarily in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway.

The problem of illegal camping by the homeless in the Parkway has denied the people of the North Sacramento community use of their Parkway with any degree of safety...

The ineffective policies causing the problems have not improved over the past 20 years, resulting in an even worse situation today.

Recently, the American River Parkway Foundation post on their website noted:

“Illegal camping has been a growing issue for the American River Parkway. Now, with 2,000-3,000 illegal campers, the impact is going to be felt for years to come.”

[Addressing Illegal Camping on the Parkway - American River Parkway Foundation \(arpf.org\)](http://www.arpf.org)

With that many homeless camping in the Parkway and the resulting environmental degradation, this is clearly one of the major problems affecting the Parkway.

The other related problem is Parkway management, Sacramento County, which has done virtually nothing to help, leading us to conclude that the best way to ensure effective Parkway management is to have a nonprofit corporation manage it, as is being done by the Sacramento Zoo and Central Park in New York.

The problem with County management is that the people controlling the management direction are politicians,, who, like politicians, work under contradictory conditions; trying to satisfy voters on the one hand, bureaucratic realities on the other, with the public coming in last most of the time.

This is not from the ill-intent of the politicians—most I have met are decent people wanting to do good—but from the contradictions inherent in the process.

While we cannot claim credit for making the situation on the Parkway better over the past 20 years—as the situation is clearly worse—we can claim credit for keeping the issue before public leadership.

Our other guiding principles, there are 6, can be seen on our website at [American River Parkway Preservation Society \(arpps.org\)](http://www.arpps.org)

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American River Parkway Preservation Society

E-Letter #252, July 7, 2023

Local Leadership Chaos

Another hint why public leadership seems unable to deal with this issue effectively.

Story from *Sacramento Bee*.

An excerpt.

“This constant, petty finger-pointing between the county and the city of Sacramento is exhausting. I want nothing so much as to take a nap and only wake up after they’ve worked their squabbles out.

“There are 1.5 million people in this county, nearly 10,000 of whom are living in indigency, and not a single one of them has time for government infighting — especially not the several unhoused people who are statistically predicted to die from heat stroke in the next few weeks. Sacramentans need real solutions to a humanitarian crisis that’s growing by three people for every one who exits homelessness in this region.

“Tuesday’s miscommunication at the city of Sacramento’s homelessness workshop was embarrassing for everyone involved — but perhaps particularly for the city, as the host and organizer of a meeting that proved so spectacularly unorganized.

“The city and the county each have their own version of what happened Tuesday. But at the meeting, the council made it sound in chambers as though the county had failed to show up properly prepared for their workshop.

“That appears now to have been a vast overstatement.

“Apparently, some council members thought Chevon Kothari, Deputy County Executive for Social Services, was going to give the same presentation on homeless services that the County Board of Supervisors had received in late May.

“It turns out Kothari only found out she was presenting just two minutes before the meeting started.

“I have to first apologize to the council,” Kothari said at the podium. “We were under the impression that today would just be a workshop on compliance so we did not come prepared with any presentation.”

“That announcement launched the workshop in an awkward direction. It left certain council members visibly frustrated and confused as to why county staff would come unprepared to present. County staff were understandably frustrated too, feeling attacked for the courtesy of attending a city council meeting and finding themselves under siege due to a lack of clear instructions and a dashed agenda that they’d had no part in forming.

“The spectacle did not go unnoticed. “Some council members implied County staff were shirking their responsibilities by not making a presentation, and that was unacceptable,” Supervisor Rich Desmond wrote in a statement after Tuesday’s meeting. “That kind of criticism from a partner jurisdiction runs counter to the spirit of the partnership we have created between the county and the city.”

“The incident underscored yet again the inability of the city and the county to work well together publicly, even while electeds such as Mayor Darrell Steinberg repeatedly insist relations are going well behind the scenes.

“PRIVATE MEETINGS KEEP OUT TOO MANY

“The city-county “4×2” was established late last year by the city of Sacramento and the county of Sacramento, and so named because it includes four Sacramento City Council members and two Sacramento County Supervisors: Mayor Steinberg, city councilors Eric Guerra, Sean Loloee and Caity Maple, and county supervisors Rich Desmond and Patrick Kennedy. The meetings are private — and that’s the whole point.

“By placing a minimum of councilors and supervisors in the room, elected officials can legally skirt Brown Act laws and keep the meetings closed to the public. The Brown Act guarantees the public’s right (and the media’s right, too) to attend meetings of local legislative bodies such as City Council or the Board of Supervisors. If less than a quorum of those members meet, then that meeting is not subject to the law.

“We all just have to take it on faith that these meetings are going well, but what we’re being shown, over and over again, is that the city and county can hardly work together to get a presentation made, much less solve the region’s homelessness crisis.”

Read more at: <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/article276886828.html#storylink=cpy>

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American River Parkway Preservation Society
E-Letter #251, May 8, 2023

Parkway Restoration Project

Good news for the Parkway in this article from the *Sacramento Bee*.

An excerpt.

“Michelle Stevens, a professor of environmental sciences at Sacramento State, was walking along the Bushy Lake behind Cal Expo in 2014 in the wake of a fire in the area when she ran into a botanist who was also strolling the path.

“The botanist, Mary Moret from Sacramento County Parks and Recreation, was feeling discouraged and upset looking at the ruins, left charred and black from the July 4 fire that not only threatened the holiday’s fireworks display but devastated the native plants and habitat behind Cal Expo.

“Sort of like a little angel coming out of the smoke, (Stevens) cheered me up and she told me that Bushy Lake would rise again,” Moret said.

“The timing of the incident was right, Moret said, because at the time, the department was looking for university partners to help manage the parkway through applied science.

“They celebrated the years of work Saturday near the Bushy Lake habitat, which sits along the north banks of the American River Parkway in the shadow of the state fairgrounds. In that celebration, the women reflected on the efforts of students and county officials who brought the 86-acre ecological habitat back to life, giving it new life as a vital living laboratory.

“But the work wasn’t easy.

“With the help of a few grants, Stevens and her students collaborated with the parks department in 2015 to build fire-resilient restoration throughout the habitat.

“Despite the restorative efforts over the following five years, a fire once again tore through the habitat in June 2021, undoing years of revitalizing planting, weeding and watering by hand.

“Stevens said she was completely devastated when she received a phone call from Sacramento State President Robert Nelsen who expressed sadness that the site had burned to the ground and offered an Anchor Grant for the students to rebuild and replant.

“I know that this project actually changes (student’s) lives,” Nelsen said. “We must continue to fund it. We must continue to support it.”

“Along with the support from the university, the project received \$350,000 in funding from the California Wildlife Conservation Board in 2021.”

[Sacramento State students restore American River habitat | The Sacramento Bee \(sacbee.com\)](#)

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American River Parkway Preservation Society E-Letter #250, March 6, 2023

What's Going on Here?

A recent story in the *Sacramento Bee* included these astounding sentences:

“The secluded riverfront camp near Discovery Park, known as Bannon Island, is home to roughly 30 seniors. Some of them have been living there for more than 20 years.

“County officials have largely allowed the camp to stay put, even providing water drop-offs at one point.”

[Sacramento County, CA, to clear Bannon Island homeless camp | The Sacramento Bee \(sacbee.com\)](#)

And this article from *KCRA 3* validates the point, [Bannon Island homeless encampment asked to clear out \(kcra.com\)](#)

Why is it that the manager of the American River Parkway, who proclaims on their website that:

“Preserving and improving the Parkway for future generations is our highest priority.” Retrieved March 6, 2023 from [American River Parkway \(sacounty.gov\)](#)

can allow this?

I don't know either.

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American River Parkway Preservation Society E-Letter #249, January 10, 2023

Storms Call for More Water Storage

Good article from the *Orange County Register*.

An excerpt.

“As Californians struggled to deal with a grueling drought that has led to water rationing and other extreme water-conservation measures, Mother Nature has this week intervened with an atmospheric river that has led to massive rainfalls and flooding — especially up north.

“This cycle of drought and flooding is nothing new. “California summers were characterized by the coughing in the pipes that meant the well was dry, and California winters by all-night watches on rivers about to crest,” wrote Joan Didion in her 1977 essay, “Holy Water.”

“Unfortunately, California has left itself dependent on the weather (or climate, if you prefer) because it hasn't built significant water infrastructure since the time that essay was published — when the state had roughly 18 million fewer residents.

“Some environmentalists argue against building water storage when there's little rain, but they only are correct if it doesn't rain again.

“History suggests the rains will always come. If California expands its storage capacity with reservoirs, off-stream storage and groundwater banking, it will have enough water to get us through the dry spells.

“The official government drought maps show that almost the entire state is facing some form of drought, but that the latest storm system has helped bolster reservoir levels. Most of our reservoirs were perilously empty, but after the latest storms Folsom is now at 74% of normal and Castaic is at 53% of normal. Those levels should rise after the next wave of expected storms.

“Building infrastructure takes time. Instead of being content that we’ve dodged another water-shortage bullet, the state’s leaders need to follow through with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s water plan.

“That means jump-starting water projects (Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat) that have been on the drawing board for decades.

“It also means quicker approval of desalination facilities (such as the proposal in Huntington Beach that the California Coastal Commission rejected) and water-recycling strategies. The state also needs to invest more heavily in rebuilding its aging levees to help protect communities threatened by floods.”

[Recent flooding shows the need for water storage – Orange County Register \(ocregister.com\)](http://ocregister.com)

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American River Parkway Preservation Society

E-Letter #248, December 6, 2022

Water in California

A must have book with welcome news about water in California.

Saving California: Solutions to the state's biggest policy problems, edited by Steven Greenhut, and here are a couple paragraphs from his essay in the book: Dealing with Drought (Chapter Five):

“California actually receives enough water through rain, snowpack and groundwater to fully meet the needs of its population. Total urban water (residential, commercial, governmental) uses comprise around 10 percent of the state’s total water supplies, so taking a conservation-heavy approach only creates diminishing returns—and has a *de minis* effect on water supplies.[2] If the state’s water wars were about numbers—how to store enough water to meet the needs of a specific population—rather than ideology, then California would have met its future needs long ago and water shortages would largely be a non-issue even during droughts.

“In fact, it was easy to conclude—based on statements they made during the drought—that some state officials and many environmentalists saw extreme conservation and water rationing as an end in itself. They clearly were using the drought to promote the kind of policies they’re always favored and weren’t about to let a good crisis go to waste. These activists and leaders didn’t seem particularly interested in developing more water supplies, which would mean embracing new water infrastructure projects and some of the other investments and market-based reforms detailed in my book, *Winning the Water Wars*. They didn’t acknowledge that most of the state’s water flows out unimpeded to the sea, but typically blamed agricultural and urban users (and Mother Nature) for the shortages. They view water storage, which remains one of the most effective means to plan for future drought years, as a blight.” (pp.70-71)

[2] Jefferey Mount and Ellen Hanak, “Water Use in California.” Public Policy Institute of California, May 2019. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/water-use-in-california/> .

Saving California: Solutions to the state's biggest policy problems, 2021, (Editor, Steven Greenhut), Pacific Research Institute, Pasadena, CA,

About Steven Greenhut:

“Steven Greenhut is Vice President of Journalism for the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity and Director of the Pacific Research Institute's Journalism Center in Sacramento. He assisted with PRI's launch of CalWatchdog.com in 2010 to provide in-depth news coverage of California government, with a focus on uncovering waste, fraud, and misuse of taxpayer dollars. Greenhut writes a weekly column for the Orange County Register, North County Times, and San Francisco Examiner.”

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American River Parkway Preservation Society

E-Letter #247, October 7, 2022

Coming Back Downtown

Good article about it and Sacramento faring well, see bold below. Article from *City Journal*.

An excerpt.

“This past spring, activity in downtown San Francisco reached just 31 percent of its 2019 level, as measured by comparing visits to points of interests such as restaurants, retail shops, and grocery stores between the two years. No other North American city of the 62 reviewed in a University of California, Berkeley [analysis](#) fell that far. Is “the City,” as its residents like to call it, destined to hollow out and become synonymous with urban decay? Or can it reverse its decline?

“Lockdowns turned urban cores into ghost towns, but not all downtowns are still hurting. The Berkeley analysis shows that Salt Lake City’s downtown activity had reached 155 percent of its pre-pandemic level. Downtown Columbus, Ohio, is busy again, too, up 112 percent. Two California downtowns, Bakersfield (117 percent) and Fresno (108 percent), have made strong recoveries. When entire cities, not just their downtowns, are considered, San Francisco fares better, but not by much. It’s second from the bottom, with a recovery value of 61 percent. Two California cities, again Bakersfield and Fresno, were first and second, with values of 139 percent and 132 percent, respectively. **Sacramento (108 percent) was fifth**, and San Diego (100 percent) eighth.

“Remote work for the city’s elite white-collar workers makes life convenient for some, but not all. TechCrunch, headquartered in San Francisco, says that the city’s small businesses “are [increasingly desperate](#) for the economic activity that office employees would bring back.” Yet office vacancies remain [high](#), and might grow.

“A full recovery is unlikely unless the outflow of residents is reversed. Between April 2020 and July 2021, the city’s population dropped 6.7 percent, the [largest decline](#) in the country dating from the early days of the pandemic to the summer of last year. Nearly 55,000 residents had fled by July 2021, taking the population back to its [lowest level since 2010](#). San Francisco ranked first and Los Angeles second in the nation [for outbound moves](#).

“San Francisco is hostile to businesses, unfriendly to families, has a homelessness problem like no other American city, and has some of the most unaffordable housing on the planet. The danger for the city is that it falls into what economist Thomas Sowell has called “[the Detroit pattern](#),” a nasty brew of “increasing taxes, harassing businesses, and pandering to unions.”

While “it got mayors re-elected,” says Sowell, “in the long-run, it reduced Detroit from a thriving city to an economic disaster area, whose population was cut in half, as its most productive citizens fled.” San Francisco faces different challenges than did deindustrializing Detroit in the twentieth century. But the feedback loop from outmigration to deteriorating public services remains a danger.

“Flight from the Motor City was in large part a response to crime. As Sowell [has written](#), the riot of 1967, which killed 43, injured nearly 1,200, and damaged more than 2,000 buildings, “marked the beginning of the decline of Detroit.” The effects persist. Detroit’s downtown recovery ranked 59th of 62, at 42 percent activity, in the University of California study.

“As Charles Fain Lehman has [observed](#), San Francisco’s crime problem consists less of the brutal violence that plagues Detroit and more of ubiquitous disorder that city officials tolerate. What the world sees on video—mass daylight shoplifting, attacks against Asians, a torrent of car break-ins—residents see up close. Theft has forced Walgreens to close more than a dozen of its San Francisco stores because it couldn’t sustain the losses to shoplifters. Target cut hours at several locations in the city due to “a significant and [alarming rise in theft](#) and security incidents.”

“City data show overall [crime is up 7.4 percent](#) this year over the same period in 2021. A few offenses—burglary, for one—have fallen. But other crimes that also affect quality of life, such as larceny, assault, robbery, car theft, and rape, are up. Last year, criminal activity, driven by steep increases in larceny, assault, and homicide, grew [13.5 percent over 2020](#). Combine all that with the just-recalled district attorney’s announcement in 2019 that he would not prosecute what he considered trifling offenses, such as public camping, public urination, and blocking sidewalks, and the results are thousands voting with their feet.”

<https://www.city-journal.org/san-franciscos-slide>

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Appendix II Newsletters

American River Parkway Preservation Society Newsletter:

Issue 80 - Fall 2023

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Article Excerpt: Sacramento’s Homeless

Another bracing article from the *California Globe*.

An excerpt.

“Sacramento’s homeless drug-addicted, mentally-ill, criminal vagrant population have clearly shown they can’t govern or take care of themselves. They have been allowed to camp, squat and roam unrestrained in the Sacramento region. They are disrupting daily business life in Sacramento’s downtown, as well as the residential neighborhoods in and around the city. And city officials and the mayor have done little to prevent and stop this.

“This daily harassment led Sacramento County District Attorney Thien Ho to [file a lawsuit against the City of Sacramento](#) in September for failing to abate the homeless crisis in the Capitol city. DA Ho said Sacramento’s homeless crisis has exploded by more than 250% in just 7 years.

“The DA’s lawsuit was filed in tandem with a civil lawsuit by Attorney Ognian Gavrillov, on behalf of Sacramento business owners and city residents, to “allow the people to have a voice.” The two lawsuits will now be consolidated because they are “nearly identical.”

“Both Da Ho and Attorney Gavrilov said the city has created a public nuisance by allowing homeless camps to spread into residential neighborhoods, and for failing to clear sidewalks and areas around public buildings.

“Following DA Ho’s lawsuit announcement, Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg accused the District Attorney of politicizing the homeless issue. DA Ho told the Globe that his lawsuit isn’t personal or political. “Public safety is my only concern,” Ho said. “I can’t raise taxes or assign housing to be built,” DA Ho said. And he reiterated that public safety is his purview as District Attorney.

“Both attorneys said they intend to take their lawsuits to trial and depose Sacramento city officials and Mayor Darrell Steinberg. However, they just sent a demand letter to City Attorney Susana Alcalá Wood and wrote that her plan to represent the city in both lawsuits is “alarming and outrageous,” because she is “a material witness in both actions,” The Sacramento Bee [reported](#).

“Ho described the city as collapsing into chaos and said Sacramento’s homeless crisis has become an “erosion of every day life.”

“Gavrilov said Sacramento Mayor Steinberg is trying to politicize something that is not a political issue, and calls this “The Steinberg Decree.”

“He’s making human tragedy and human suffering a political issue,” Gavrilov said. He added that there are “other real good council members who can show us they will do the right thing. They are with us for a solution, and not going to want a ‘perfect’ solution.”

“Sacramento is dying, Attorney Gavrilov’s lawsuit says:

“Darrell Steinberg, the City’s Mayor, is the executioner. The failure to address the ubiquitous spread of homelessness throughout the City is Steinberg’s poison.”

“The Steinberg Decree has transformed this once bucolic tree-lined city into a rotting cesspool of decay and despair. Far from exuding the prestige which accompanies being the nerve center of a massive global economy, the streets and neighborhoods of Sacramento resemble the urban decay that blight the world’s poorest developing nations.”

“Since Steinberg took office in 2016, the City’s homeless population has increased more than 250 percent. This unprecedented surge in homelessness is the direct result of a mayoral decree (the “Steinberg Decree”) which prohibits police and other City officials from clearing dangerous homeless encampments that clutter the sidewalks and pollute local neighborhoods.”

[Sacramento Homeless Crisis has Caused ‘Erosion of Every Day Life;’ City is ‘Collapsing into Chaos’ – California Globe](#)

Article Excerpt: And...the Process Continues.

And the Parkway continues to degrade, story from the *Sacramento Bee*.

An excerpt.

“Sacramento County for six months has been sitting on a \$25 million check from the state of California to shelter unhoused people living on the American River Parkway.

“Assemblyman Kevin McCarty, D-Sacramento, who co-sponsored the bill to get the county the money, sent a letter to Board of Supervisors Chairman Rich Desmond July 5 to nudge them to spend it.

“We fought diligently for these funds in the state budget, and I hope to see them utilized or a new plan for how they’ll be spent in the near future,” McCarty wrote in the letter. “I would appreciate any information you could share regarding this project.”

“The funds were supposed to cover the start up costs to shelter roughly a whopping 620 people per year in tiny homes, the letter states.

“This, combined with designated camping areas, would allow the county to serve more individuals and transform the county’s ability to get people connected to shelter and services while restoring and protecting the parkway,” the letter states.

“The county received the \$25 million in April. It’s been working since then to find a site, Desmond said Tuesday.

“We are working hard to find a site that is close to the parkway but doesn’t overly concentrate homeless shelter and housing in a single neighborhood,” Desmond said in a message to The Sacramento Bee. “In the meantime, we continue expanding our shelter and (affordable) housing as well as residential and outpatient resources for unsheltered with behavioral health needs. I am confident we will find a location that will provide a safe and supportive alternative for people camping on the Parkway.”

“Desmond said he hopes the county can identify a site by the end of the year.

“I continue to push staff to do so,” he said.

“SEARCH FOR SAFE GROUND LAND

“The county found a piece of land that was available and spent months negotiating to buy it to build and operate a Safe Ground. But earlier this month the owner of the land entered into a contract to sell it to another bidder, county spokeswoman Janna Haynes said. The county declined to disclose the address. The county next plans to publish a Request for Qualifications, asking for private entities who want to help the county find sites.

“Appropriate sites would be near the Parkway, including downtown, because people are more likely to accept shelter in places near where they are camping, Haynes said. That’s a strategy McCarty agrees with, he said.

“For that reason he understands the delay.

“Yes it’s taking too long, but it always takes too long,” said McCarty, a former councilman who’s running for mayor of Sacramento next year. “I think policy makers at all levels want swifter action. This is one I want to get right. I’d rather find an appropriate location. Pointing fingers at local governments isn’t the answer. We are all in this together and need to work cooperatively ... this is not easy. It took a long time to get to this problem and it’s gonna take a lot of work to get out of it.”

Read more at: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article279744314.html#storylink=cpy>

Article Excerpt: Sacramento, Take Note!

Good news from Phoenix in *City Journal*.

An excerpt.

“Though tent cities in Los Angeles and San Francisco get the most media coverage, the sprawling homeless encampments near Phoenix’s downtown are some of the most disturbing examples of America’s current homelessness crisis. For years, the City of Phoenix has allowed encampments in the area now known as “the Zone” to spread and disorder to metastasize. But last week, an Arizona state judge stepped in to demand that the city take action.

“The city’s negligence on public encampments has yielded tragic results. Almost 800 homeless people [died in Phoenix’s Maricopa County last year](#), more than 40 percent more than in 2021. A recent [New York Times story](#) described how a local sandwich shop had to deal with outdoor defecation, public masturbation and sex, fires that incinerated trees, and methamphetamine use around the establishment.

“Local residents and businesses had brought a case against Phoenix, claiming that the Zone was a “public nuisance” that the city must clean up. Given the piles of trash, needles, tents, human waste, bodies, and the city’s habit of turning a blind eye to them, Arizona State Judge

Scott Blaney found it easy to declare that officials had tolerated a situation that, in the [words of state public-nuisance law](#), “interferes with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood.” If the Zone didn’t qualify as a nuisance under these terms, it’s hard to know what would.

“Judge Blaney had earlier given the plaintiffs [a preliminary win](#) and had pushed Phoenix to act, but the city took only halting steps. This time, the judge demanded that the city remove tents and other structures from the area by November.

“Against claims that Phoenix was helpless against the rising tide of homelessness, the judge noted some inconvenient facts. While the city denied that people were drawn to the area because of its lax enforcement against public drug use and camping, the judge noted that the homeless are often mobile. In fact, in places like San Francisco and Austin, Texas, about a third of the homeless had first become homeless elsewhere. A [Seattle study](#) found that the majority of its homeless population had become so outside the city; less than a third originally hailed from there. The proportion of the unsheltered homeless from outside these cities is likely higher.

“Many homeless on the streets have severe problems with drugs, alcohol, and mental illness, as everyone knows. Leaving such impaired people on the street almost guarantees that they will end up dead or in jail. As I testified as a volunteer expert witness in the case, a humane enforcement policy that applies rules about camping and street sleeping but encourages movement to shelter or services can save lives.

“The city argued that any enforcement would conflict with the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals’ infamous 2018 *Martin v. City of Boise* decision, which states that cities cannot enforce their anti-camping or sleeping laws without sufficient shelter. It’s now clear that the court’s ruling hasn’t helped the homeless. Homelessness in Ninth Circuit states has increased by more than 25 percent since 2018, even as it dropped around the rest of the country. The proportion of unsheltered homeless in these states has risen even faster. If the goal of the federal courts had been to reduce homelessness and get more people inside, it [doesn’t seem to be working](#).

“The plaintiffs also showed that lack of shelter wasn’t the main issue for the homeless in the Zone. Judge Blaney observed that Phoenix’s own polling of the homeless downtown found that only about 14 percent cited a lack of shelter beds for why they stayed outside. More said that they did not like the shelters’ curfews or rules, or that they did not want to part with their possessions.

“The plaintiffs also demonstrated that the city does not have to wait decades to construct large new shelters in order to clear the streets humanely. Local groups had proposed the creation of “structured campgrounds,” also known as “sanctioned camping areas.” Cities across the West, including Portland, Oregon, have created these areas—with sanitation, services, and security—as an affordable alternative to street sleeping. They allow cities to provide alternatives to the street, while also allowing them to enforce laws without running afoul of the *Boise* decision or its more recent iteration from the Ninth Circuit, *Johnson v. Grants Pass*. Though Phoenix once claimed that it could not create such campgrounds, the city has recently adopted such a proposal based on a plan submitted by the plaintiffs two years ago.”

Society Information

The American River Parkway Preservation Society is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. As a member, you will receive a monthly e-letter, quarterly newsletter, and periodic planning position papers.

Federal ID # 20-0238035

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Our Mission

Preserve, Protect, & Strengthen the American River Parkway, Our Community’s Natural Heart.

Our Vision

We want our Parkway, seven generations from now, to be a vibrant, accessible, and serene sanctuary, nourishing and refreshing the spirit of all who enter it.

Our Guiding Principles

- (1) Preserving the Parkway is not an option, it’s a necessity.
- (2) What’s good for the salmon is good for the river.
- (3) Regarding illegal camping by the homeless in the North Sacramento area of the Parkway, social and environmental justice call upon us to help the poor and distressed person but not at the expense of the adjacent community to visit the Parkway safely.
- (4) If it can be seen from the Parkway, it shouldn’t be built along the Parkway.

- (5) Regarding new Parkway usages, inclusion should be the operating principle rather than exclusion.
- (6) The suburban lifestyle—as surrounds the American River Parkway—which is imbued within the aspirational center of the *California Dream* and whose vision is woven into the heart of the *American Dream*, is a deeply loved way of life whose sustainability we all desire.

The Society depends solely on its membership to continue our advocacy to preserve the Parkway in perpetuity, and we deeply appreciate any additional financial support you can provide, or by encouraging others to become members. Thank You!

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American River Parkway Preservation Society Newsletter: Issue 78– Spring 2023

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Article Excerpt: California’s Shadow Self

Story by Michael Shellenberger from *City Journal*.

An excerpt.

“For roughly 100 years, California was America’s synecdoche: the part of the country that best represented its whole. It was town and country, coastal metropolis and interior farmland, opportunity and freedom. It was Hollywood, the defense industry, and the high-tech economy. Its people were both high-achieving and laid-back, able to enjoy the state’s natural bounty, from the beaches and cliffs to the forests and Sierras. California boasted a pioneering public education system, in which every child, no matter how poor, could receive a good education. It had affordable suburbs, built around nuclear families. It was growing, quadrupling its population after World War II. In a word, California represented progress.

“Now the state has become America’s shadow self. True, it is more prosperous than ever, surpassing Germany last year to become the world’s fourth-largest economy. But Los Angeles, San Francisco,

Sacramento, and smaller cities are today overrun by homeless encampments, which European researchers more accurately describe as “open drug scenes.” Crime has become so rampant that many have simply stopped reporting it, with nearly half of San Franciscans telling pollsters that they were a victim of theft in the last five years and a shocking one-quarter saying that they had been assaulted or threatened with assault.

“These pathologies are just the most visible manifestations of a deeper rot. Less than [half](#) of California’s public school students are proficient in reading, and just one-third are proficient in math (with a stunning [9 percent of African-Americans and 12 percent of Latinos](#) in L.A. public schools proficient in eighth-grade math). Education achievement declined precipitously in California in 2021, as the state kept children studying at home well after kids in other states had returned to the classroom. “Californians pay the most income tax, gasoline tax, and sales tax in the United States, yet suffer from electricity blackouts and abysmal public services. Residential electricity prices [grew three times faster](#) in 2021 than they did in the rest of the United States. And the state government, dependent on income taxes, faces a projected \$23 billion budget deficit that will only grow if the nation’s economy enters a recession. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given these trends, California’s population stopped expanding in 2014 and has slightly declined since, resulting in the loss of a congressional seat after the 2020 Census.

“Homelessness and disorder loom as the biggest problems. Most of the assaults and threats that San Franciscans reported came from the city’s large number of homeless and mentally ill addicts, who are allowed to sleep, defecate, and use drugs in public. Los Angeles is in even worse shape, as the city is so much larger than San Francisco and the local government is, against stereotype, even more progressive. Skid Row can no longer contain its massive population of street homeless; the city’s government has all but legalized open-air drug dealing and use. Over the last decade, homelessness increased 43 percent in California, even as it fell 7 percent nationally.

“Some signs of hope seem to have emerged on this front. Since taking office in December 2022, the new mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, has worked to shut down drug markets and tried to move people into shelter and housing through a program called “Inside Safe.” Venice Beach voters elected to the city council a moderate named Traci Park, who worked with Bass to move street-dwellers inside. San Francisco’s mayor, London Breed, closed an experimental government-funded drug-consumption site in June, responding to complaints from residents, business leaders, and mothers of homeless addicts. In November 2022, San Franciscans elected a majority of moderates to the city’s governing board of supervisors, who, like the mayor, favor stronger action to remove self-destructive addicts from the streets. Those changes followed a voter recall earlier that year of a radical district attorney, Chesa Boudin, whose policies of de-prosecution encouraged disorder.

“But there is less than meets the eye to these developments. Bass’s office reports that just 31 homeless people in Hollywood, and fewer than 100 in Venice, had been moved inside between December 11, 2022, and January 21 of this year. For context, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, there were 41,290 total homeless in Los Angeles in 2020, of whom 70 percent were “unsheltered”—living in tents or cardboard boxes on sidewalks and underneath overpasses. Voters increased the progressive majority on the Los Angeles City Council and tossed out the sheriff of Los Angeles County, who had advocated a tougher response to crime, drugs, and violence, in November 2022. In San Francisco, a judge halted efforts to move the city’s vulnerable homeless indoors before torrential rains pounded the state for weeks; the judge had sided with a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union against the city. And six months after closing the drug-consumption site, Mayor Breed and the Board of Supervisors announced in early January that they intended to open 12 new sites across the city. In the state’s two major cities, significant improvement on crime, drugs, and homelessness is unlikely under current political leadership.

“What explains California’s dramatic decline? And what would it take for the state to return to its former greatness?”

“The reasons progressives give for California’s problems stopped making sense long ago. Since the 1970s, they have attributed much of the state’s difficulties to Republicans’ unwillingness to fund social programs. The cause of homelessness, they alleged, was Ronald Reagan’s decision to close mental institutions and tighten civil-commitment standards as governor and his refusal, as president, to fund “community-based” alternatives. But progressives have been unable to make that argument credibly for decades. For 12 years, Democrats have held a supermajority of the California legislature and controlled the governor’s mansion. California [spends much more than other states on homelessness and mental illness](#), yet has worse outcomes.

“Without Republicans to blame, Democrats have turned to the state’s housing shortage as a catch-all explanation. A lack of housing does cause problems in California, as Christopher Elmendorf explains in this issue. Los Angeles and the Bay Area struggle even to build apartments near mass-transit stations. Insufficient housing, massively driving up the cost of keeping a roof overhead, contributed to the state’s population drop-off since 2014, as well as to the loss of many tech companies and jobs to more affordable locales in Texas and Florida. And it’s not just housing that is missing—the inability of California’s local governments to build hospitals, group homes, and shelters has undermined cities’ ability to solve the homelessness problem.

“But expensive housing is not the main driver of street disorder. Advocates of development, such as progressive state senator Scott Wiener, cynically insist in public that expensive rent causes thousands of people to wind up living and dying on city sidewalks, yet freely admit in other contexts that leaders’ refusal to mandate psychiatric or addiction treatment is the true culprit. If California were to deal with homeless addicts and untreated mental illness on a statewide level, as in Massachusetts, and not locally, then the street population could get treatment in drug-recovery communities, hospitals, and group homes in cheaper parts of the state, such as the Central Valley.”

[America’s Shadow Self | City Journal \(city-journal.org\)](#)

Article Excerpt: Fight for the Suburbs

It continues in New York

From the *New York Times*.

An excerpt.

“Scarsdale, N.Y., [a village about 20 miles north](#) of New York City known for Tudor-style architecture and large, lavish estates, may seem like an unusual setting for an aging, five-story parking garage that neighbors [have described](#) as “an eye sore,” “decrepit,” “unsafe” and “seedy.”

“But for over 40 years the site has survived multiple attempts to raze and redevelop it. The latest push, in which the village is considering plans to build hundreds of apartments there, including some that

would have been affordable to people with lower incomes, has [been in limbo for three years](#) after some Scarsdale residents complained that new residents could strain schools and burden taxpayers.

“The second any opposition came up, it was largely put into suspended animation,” said Tim Foley, a Scarsdale resident and chief executive of the Building and Realty Institute, an industry group pushing for more housing in and around Westchester County, which includes Scarsdale.

“Resistance to bigger development is a familiar dynamic in suburbs like Scarsdale, where single-family homes and sprawl are distinctive features. Now, Gov. Kathy Hochul, a moderate Democrat, is [taking on the daunting](#) task of forcing suburbs to embrace housing, in a mission to get 800,000 units built over the next decade and ease the state’s housing crisis.

“Ms. Hochul would join officials in places as far as [Maine](#) and [California](#) that have increasingly clashed with communities resisting development.

“The headwinds she faces are intense. The New York City suburbs are considered the birthplace of American suburbia: New Yorkers began moving in droves to [communities in Westchester County](#) and [on Long Island](#) to escape urban life beginning in the mid-20th century. It created segregated enclaves that resisted new development — and racial integration — for decades.

“By one measure, Westchester County and Long Island [have allowed fewer homes](#) to be built per person in the past decade than the regions around nearly every other major U.S. city, including San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Boston.

“Ms. Hochul’s plan has touched a political third rail and drawn the anger of Republicans and some Democrats, as negotiations over the state budget come to a head this week in Albany.

“So far, the governor has not backed down. In an interview, Ms. Hochul said she hoped to cut through the “hysteria” around her plan: “The status quo is not working.”

“Leaders of the Democratic-led State Legislature criticized her approach as heavy handed. Several local officials argue too much new housing could strain sewers, roads and other local infrastructure.

“Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, a Democrat who represents Scarsdale and other parts of Westchester County, said the “proposal would change the complexity of our county in a way that doesn’t make sense.”

“The stakes for Ms. Hochul, who was elected to her first full term in November, are high. Her plan could further alienate voters on Long Island who have already swung heavily toward Republicans and potentially estrange Democrats in Westchester who played a crucial role in her narrow victory last year.

“Still, the governor appears ready to spend significant political capital on a plan that could potentially define her legacy.

“My own kids had to leave the area in search of a lower-cost opportunity because New York got too expensive and a lot of it is the housing cost,” she said. “This is for employees, this is for families we’re trying to help stay here and also senior citizens.”

“Some New York City suburbs, including several in New Jersey but also some on Long Island and in Westchester, have supported building more homes. Westchester’s largest cities, including New Rochelle and Yonkers, have helped fuel much of that construction.

“But the need for housing continues to outpace the current pace of development. A [December report from the Regional Plan Association](#), a nonprofit group, estimated that New York needs to add more than 817,000 homes over the next decade to keep up with population growth and ease overcrowding.

“The governor’s plan has two main components. One would force every community to expand its housing stock every three years by set percentages — 3 percent downstate and 1 percent upstate. Another could force communities to allow at least 50 homes per acre on average to be built within a half-mile of many Long Island Railroad and Metro-North stations.

“If a city or town improperly rejected a development and did not meet the percentage targets, a fast-track process could be triggered that could overrule local opposition.

“In Westchester, over two dozen mayors and town supervisors signed a letter [last month](#) criticizing Ms. Hochul’s plan. State Senator Shelley Mayer, a Democrat from Westchester who represents Scarsdale, said that the governor failed to talk to communities in the lead-up to her plan. She added that it was “unfair” to suggest “every community in Westchester or the suburbs is anti-new housing or anti-low income housing.” In a statement, [the village of Scarsdale](#) said it was “eager to hear and see what plans come from Albany.”

“In Scarsdale, where some 18,000 people live, boutique shops line the village center and mansions peek through the trees of the surrounding hilly neighborhoods. When the village, considered one of the wealthiest in the nation, was linked by train to Manhattan in the 1800s, local officials quickly placed restrictions on apartments. In the 1960s, the village board [resisted a plan](#) to build low-income or middle-income apartments because doing so could create an “isolated urban ghetto.”

“The total number of homes in Scarsdale — about 5,750 in 2020, according to the Census Bureau — has [barely changed since 1990](#).

“The eclectic, small-town feel is part of the appeal for many residents who remain skeptical about development.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/29/nyregion/nyc-suburbs-homes-hochul.html>

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American River Parkway Preservation Society Newsletter:

Issue 77– Winter 2022/2023

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In the middle of the best water year we have seen in some time, here are some recent ARPPS blog [Parkway Blog | An American River Parkway Preservation Society Weblog \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.arppssociety.com/) posts.

Great letter from San Francisco Chronicle

Posted on [January 12, 2023](#) by [David H Lukenbill](#)

“Water, water everywhere and nary a drop to drink. A parade of atmospheric rivers is drenching California with an estimated [22 trillion gallons of rain](#), enough to cover the entire state in several inches of water.

“Tragically, we’re capturing only a fraction of it while \$2.7 billion approved by voters in 2014 to expand water storage sits largely idle. The seven projects included in [Proposition 1](#) have the collective capacity to increase the state’s [water storage](#) by [900 billion gallons](#), enough to supply up to 2.7 million homes for a year. But nearly five years after initial funding was awarded, none of the projects has yet broken ground.

“It’s absolutely critical we accelerate these projects to begin storing water that can help us blunt future droughts. California and the federal government must work together on ways to streamline permits for infrastructure projects essential for adapting to climate change.

“Jim Wunderman, president and CEO, Bay Area Council”

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/letterstotheeditor/article/storing-storm-atmospheric-river-rainwater-17707962.php>

Water Infrastructure

Posted on January 10, 2023 by David H Lukenbill

Good words but will actions match, story from *KCRA*.

An excerpt.

“As California remains in a state of emergency for both flood and drought, elected officials at the state Capitol are working on how to avoid this dual state of emergency situation in the future.

“Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree: The state needs to update its water systems and boost California’s ability to capture and store water to alleviate the effects of drought, especially when major storms or atmospheric rivers dump rain.

“Updating the state’s water systems may be one of the few pushes this year when Democrats and Republicans work together. Here is a look at the proposals.

“Assembly Bill 62 – Statewide water storage expansion

“Weeks before the series of atmospheric rivers began hitting the state, Assm. Devon Mathis, R-Visalia, filed a proposal that sets statewide targets to increase above and below-ground water storage capacity by a total of 3.7 million acre-feet by 2030, to eventually reach the goal of 4 million acre-feet by 2040.

“Let’s get this storage done; let’s get it built,” said Mathis, who noted the numbers are based on a [water strategy plan Gov. Gavin Newsom introduced last summer](#).

“The governor warned the state could lose 10% of its water supply by 2040.

“Mathis said his bill aims to hold the governor to his word. A spokesperson for the governor’s office said he does not generally comment on pending legislation.

“AB 62 would also require the state water board and the Department of Water Resources to design and implement measures to increase statewide water storage to achieve the 2030 and 2040 targets. It would also require the administration to submit progress reports to the Legislature starting in 2027.

“AB 30- Atmospheric Rivers Research and Forecast Improvement

“Assm. Chris Ward, D-San Diego, introduced this bill to optimize water supply and flood prevention with new technology.

“The bill would require the Department of Water Resources to research, develop and use new observations, prediction models and forecasting methods to improve predictions of atmospheric rivers. The bill also aims to improve predictions of an atmospheric river’s impacts on water supply, flooding, post-wildfire debris flows and environmental conditions.

“AB 30 would also require DWR to take all actions within its existing authority to operate reservoirs in a way that improves flood protection and to reoperate flood control and water storage facilities to capture water generated by atmospheric rivers. Ward notes the system hasn’t had improvements in nearly 20 years.

“Mathis said he looks forward to potentially working with Ward on the issue.

“AB 30 and AB 62 likely won’t be the only pieces of legislation filed to address the state’s water infrastructure. State lawmakers have until mid-February to introduce new bills.

Newsom’s Administration efforts

“The governor and state lawmakers agreed to earmark more than \$8 billion over the last three years for water infrastructure improvements and response to drought.

“Newsom said the investments include improvements to conveyance, stormwater capture strategies, groundwater replenishment and strategies to capture flood flow during strong storms the state has been experiencing since the start of the year.

“The state is leveraging new technology to study atmospheric rivers to help prepare and respond to major storms. The governor said Sunday a C130 aircraft was flying around the latest system to collect data.”

[Lawmakers want California to benefit more from atmospheric rivers \(kcra.com\)](https://www.kcra.com/news/california-lawmakers-want-benefit-more-atmospheric-rivers)

Storms Call for More Water Storage

Posted on [January 6, 2023](#) by [David H Lukenbill](#)

Good article from the *Orange County Register*.

An excerpt.

“As Californians struggled to deal with a grueling drought that has led to water rationing and other extreme water-conservation measures, Mother Nature has this week intervened with an atmospheric river that has led to massive rainfalls and flooding — especially up north.

“This cycle of drought and flooding is nothing new. “California summers were characterized by the coughing in the pipes that meant the well was dry, and California winters by all-night watches on rivers about to crest,” wrote Joan Didion in her 1977 essay, “Holy Water.”

“Unfortunately, California has left itself dependent on the weather (or climate, if you prefer) because it hasn’t built significant water infrastructure since the time that essay was published — when the state had roughly 18 million fewer residents.

“Some environmentalists argue against building water storage when there’s little rain, but they only are correct if it doesn’t rain again.

“History suggests the rains will always come. If California expands its storage capacity with reservoirs, off-stream storage and groundwater banking, it will have enough water to get us through the dry spells.

“The official government drought maps show that almost the entire state is facing some form of drought, but that the latest storm system has helped bolster reservoir levels. Most of our reservoirs were perilously empty, but after the latest storms Folsom is now at 74% of normal and Castaic is at 53% of normal. Those levels should rise after the next wave of expected storms.

“Building infrastructure takes time. Instead of being content that we’ve dodged another water-shortage bullet, the state’s leaders need to follow through with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s water plan.

“That means jump-starting water projects (Sites Reservoir and Temperance Flat) that have been on the drawing board for decades.

“It also means quicker approval of desalination facilities (such as the proposal in Huntington Beach that the California Coastal Commission rejected) and water-recycling strategies. The state also needs to invest more heavily in rebuilding its aging levees to help protect communities threatened by floods.”

[Recent flooding shows the need for water storage – Orange County Register \(ocregister.com\)](#)

Water Storage?

Posted on [January 4, 2023](#) by [David H Lukenbill](#)

The current storm tracks (story from *CalMatters*) raise yet another example of public leadership’s idiocy in not providing additional water storage facilities.

An excerpt.

“Raising questions about whether California’s elaborate system of flood protections will hold, another dangerous storm is barreling toward the Sacramento Valley, where rains already punched through some levees and floods killed at least one person.

“Last weekend’s storms have already tested the flood-prevention infrastructure across the region, which sits at the confluence of two major rivers and bears the brunt of heavy rains. “It’s a bathtub, basically,” said Beth Salyers, deputy district engineer for the federal Army Corps of Engineers in Sacramento.

“An estimated 1.3 million people and \$223 billion worth of property in the Central Valley are protected by the state-federal systems of levees, dams and other structures.

“California spends \$48 million annually for operating flood protections but needs much more — “\$3.2 billion over the next five years of implementation,” according to the state’s [Central Valley Flood Protection Plan](#), a document produced in 2012 and updated last month. Of that, the state’s responsibility ranges from \$1.8 billion to \$2.8 billion.

“An estimated \$25 to \$30 billion in funding over 30 years could help the state “avoid the astronomical cost of catastrophic flooding in the Central Valley estimated to be as high as \$1 trillion, in addition to an incalculable toll on lives and public well-being,” the plan says.

“So far, this winter’s storms have been severe but not catastrophic: The New Year’s Eve storm “stalled out” over the watershed of the Cosumnes River. Portions of privately owned levees on the river gave way, flooding nearby areas. The levees, constructed to reclaim the land for

agriculture, are generally rated only to handle a 10-year flood, according to Sacramento County officials. The breaching of the levees shut down Highway 99 and stranded motorists.

“But the region’s two major reservoirs held, and the Sacramento and American rivers did not experience major floods.

“The investments we’ve made to the flood system have absolutely helped,” said Gary Lippner, the Department of Water Resources’ deputy director of flood management and dam safety. “At the larger scale, our system is much more ready for high-water events.”

“The Central Valley has a long, painful history of deluges: [The Great Flood of 1861-2](#), triggered by weeks of rain and snow, is still remembered as the worst disaster to ever befall California, inundating the entire valley, killing thousands of people statewide and devastating the economy.

“The state’s capital city was built in a floodplain and requires an extensive system of dams and levees to protect it. Even now, federal, state and local authorities are in the midst of upgrading those defenses, particularly in the Sacramento region, where multi-year, multi-billion-dollar projects are underway.

“Major improvements have been made in the region and more are underway, thanks to about \$1.8 billion in state and federal funds. The Army Corps and state have been upgrading about 45 miles of levees over a 5-year period, and work on the final 2.8 miles is scheduled to begin in the spring.

“Among the structural upgrades are raising levee heights, boring as deep as 150 feet to reinforce levees to prevent seepage and piling rocks on riverbanks to reduce erosion.

“All of the work that we’ve done along the American and Sacramento Rivers are helping the current situation. We are not seeing flooding off these rivers,” Salyers said. The completed projects are now weather-tested, she said, and “performing the way we wanted them to.”

[Sacramento area, already deluged, braces for more floods – CalMatters](#)

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