

DIGNITY DENIED

HOMELESS & NOWHERE TO GO....LITERALLY

*Sacramento City Bathrooms:
Limited Access for Homeless People:
An Environmental Justice Issue*



Warren Park – locked



Fremont Park - Closed

March 2018



BACKGROUND

An Environmental Justice Issue

Dignity Denied: For several years the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness [SRCEH] along with other advocates, including Loaves and Fishes and the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee [SHOC] have decried the hypocrisy of city officials who say on the one hand that homelessness is a public health issue but on the other hand close public bathrooms, causing people experiencing homelessness to use the streets, alleys and parkways as their urinals and potentially be criminalized for urinating or defecating in public.

Pit Stop: San Francisco: The program began in San Francisco's Tenderloin district in 2014 with three locations. In almost four years the program has expanded to 17 locations. The SF Department of Public Works partners with Hunters Point Family, the nonprofit organization that staffs the Pit Stops, as part of a workforce development program for people who have faced barriers to employment.

The popular program, which was recognized by Harvard Kennedy School for innovation and serves as a national model deployed by other cities, provides an alternative to using the San Francisco streets and sidewalks as a toilet. Each facility costs about \$100,000.

The result:

- People can take care of their bathroom needs with dignity
- Neighborhoods are made more livable
- Complaints about human waste in public spaces around the Pit Stop locations have gone down, which allows Public Works public cleaning crews to focus more attention on other hotspots.

Pit Stop: Sacramento: In June 2016, at the urging of Sacramento City Councilmember Harris, the City created a six-month mobile pilot restroom program, Pit Stop, which operated from June to December 2016, modeled after the Pit Stop program in San Francisco. The program operated from 8 am – 6 pm, seven days a week, parked in the River District, near the direct service program Loaves & Fishes, an area that has a high concentration of people experiencing homelessness. Pit Stop was staffed by two attendants or monitors and consisted of three stalls, one of which was ADA accessible, was air-conditioned and offered a trash receptacle for sharps disposal and pet waste bags. It is important to note, that unlike San Francisco, Sacramento did not employ people experiencing homelessness, despite SRCEH advocating for this to be a homeless employment program.

The high cost of dignity: The six month pilot project cost \$173,599, including the one-time cost of purchasing the portable facility of \$35,425; \$47,203 to transport the unit; \$29,203 in supplies, \$39,713 in monitor salaries and \$29,040 in program management salaries. On an annualized basis, the cost of Pit Stop would be \$347,198.

Cost per flush: \$18.58 per flush: From June 2016 – September 2016, 5,592 men, 3,512 women and 240 ADA men or women who needed an ADA bathroom used the program for a total of 9,344 uses of the Pit Stop Facility. At a cost of \$173,599 for six months, the usage equates to \$18.58 per flush.

Sacramento's Pit Stop



Cost of dignity compared to cost of mitigating impacts of homelessness:

Based on the advocacy of SRCEH, Sacramento City in 2015 did an analysis of the cost of homelessness to the City, *Sacramento City Cost of Homelessness Report and Recommendation*.

Overall, in 2015 the City of Sacramento spent \$13.6 million on costs related to homelessness:

- \$7 million: mitigating the impacts of homelessness [bathroom related costs; homeless camps clean-up; security etc.] and
- \$6.6 million on services and support.

Bathroom mitigation: According to the report, the City spent \$349,157 on bathroom related costs in FY14-15 or about 5% of the total cost of \$7 million of “mitigating the impacts of homelessness.”

Table 1 below compares the annualized cost of Pit Stop to the 2015 *Cost of Homelessness* report regarding “bathroom related – mitigating the impacts of homelessness expenses.”

The annualized cost of Pit Stop is nearly identical to the bathroom costs that merely mitigate the impacts of homelessness and do not provide the dignity that Pit Stop affords people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the value-added of needle collection as well as keeping the surrounding sidewalks and streets clean is well worth the investment.

Table 1: Costs comparison: Pit Stop to Bathroom related mitigation

<i>Pit Stop annualized cost</i>	<i>2015 bathroom related costs</i>	<i>Pit Stop costs without transportation [\$94,406]</i>	<i>Savings: Pit Stop w/o transportation compared to 2015 bathroom related costs</i>
\$347,198	\$349,157	\$252,792	\$96,365

Dignity Denied Again: Back to the Streets & Alleys: Nevertheless, the Sacramento City decided not to continue the Pit Stop pilot program and for the past 15 months, have forced people experiencing homelessness back to using the streets, alleys and parks as their bathroom, despite the high bathroom related costs that could keep Pit Stop open annually with a cost savings to the City of almost \$100,000 annually.

Public Health Nightmare:

Hepatitis A: A Public Health Crisis: Hepatitis A is a viral disease that primarily attacks the liver, and can be deadly in seniors and immune-compromised people. It is most commonly spread by people not washing their hands after using the bathroom and then contaminating food.

In late 2017, there was a Hepatitis A outbreak in the homeless population in San Diego, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Los Angeles San Diego responded by installing portable bathrooms and sinks for homeless people. Sacramento County Department of Health ordered 1,000 vaccines for homeless people, about 25% of the need, but did not open up any public bathrooms.

As of February 8, 2018, the CA Department of Public Health documented 694 cases resulting in 454 hospitalizations and 21 deaths.

E.Coli Pollutants: A report summarizing test results from 2007 to 2014 found average levels of E. coli at three sites that were higher than the EPA standard, “beyond which the water body is not recommended for recreation.” The three sites are in the westernmost section of the American River Parkway, near downtown Sacramento, where the highest concentration of homeless camps are set up.

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board has proposed adding the bacteria to a list of pollutants that make the lower American River a federally designated impaired water body. A state board is expected to sign off on the decision later this year and ask for final approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Homeless Camp – American River Parkway, Sacramento

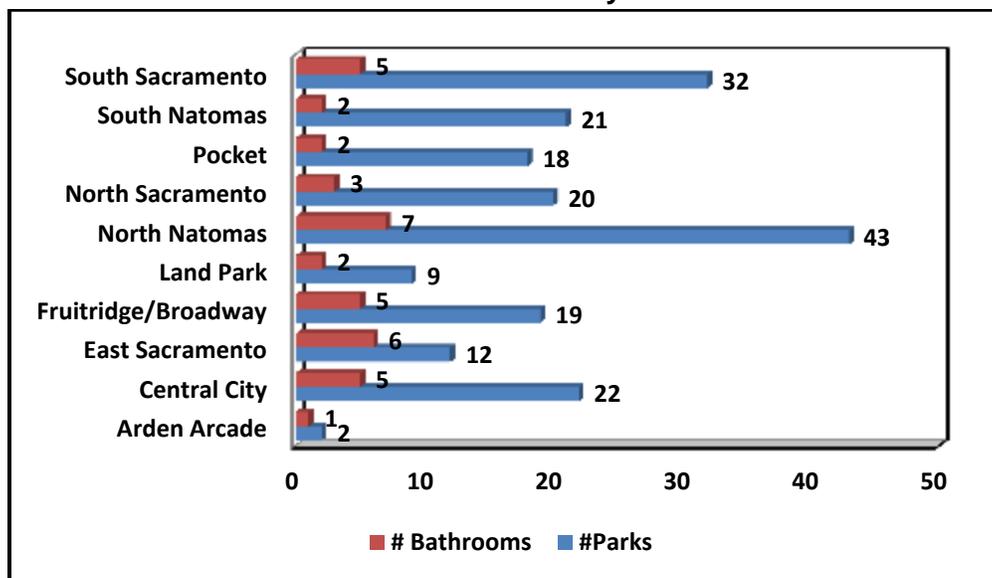
**SACRAMENTO CITY: LIMITED ACCESS TO BATHROOMS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE:
SRCEH ANALYSIS**

According to the Sacramento City's Parks and Rec website there are 226 parks and parkways in the City of Sacramento. Of these, 21 parks are not operated by the City but rather other counties, cities or local organizations. Thus, of the 205 parks the City operates, 38 or 18.5% of the parks have bathroom facilities. Table 2 and Figure 1 below details the distribution of parks and bathrooms in ten neighborhoods in Sacramento City.

Table 2: Distribution of Parks and Parks with Bathrooms in Sacramento City

Neighborhood	Number of Parks	% of Total # of Parks	Number of Bathrooms	% of Bathrooms in Neighborhood Park	% of Total # of Bathrooms
Arden Arcade	2	1%	1	50%	2.6%
Central City	22	11.1%	5	22.7%	13.2%
East Sacramento	12	6.1%	6	50%	15.8%
Fruitridge/Broadway	19	9.6%	5	26.3%	13.2%
Land Park	9	4.5%	2	22.2%	5.3%
North Natomas	43	21.7%	7	16.3%	18.4%
North Sacramento	20	10.1%	3	15%	7.9%
Pocket	18	9.1%	2	11.1%	5.3%
South Natomas	21	10.6%	2	9.5%	5.3%
South Sacramento	32	16.2%	5	15.6%	13.2%

**Figure 1: Number of Parks and Public Bathrooms by Geographic Region:
Sacramento City**



SRCEH FINDINGS:

SRCEH visited each of the 38 parks [Feb. 20 – 23 during day time hours] and looked at whether there was actually a park there; whether the park had a bathroom; if so – how many bathrooms; and if the bathroom was open or closed and hours open.

Table 3 below details of the 38 bathrooms in parks in the City of Sacramento, the number of parks that do not have a bathroom or the bathrooms are locked.

Table 3: # of Bathrooms Open/Closed

Neighborhood	Number of Bathrooms	No bathroom	% No bathroom	# of Bathrooms Closed	% of Bathrooms closed	% Total No/closed Bathrooms Closed in Neighborhood Parks
Arden Arcade	1	1	100%			-
Central City	5	1	20%	2	40%	60%
East Sacramento	6		-			-
Fruitridge/Broadway	5		-	3	60%	60%
Land Park	2		-			-
North Natomas	7	3	42.8%			42.8%
North Sacramento	3	1	-	1	33%	33%
Pocket	2		-			-
South Natomas	2		-			-
South Sacramento	5	1	20%	1	20%	40%

Table 4 lists the 38 parks in alphabetical order and identifies their neighborhood region; status and hours of operation.

Table 4: Parks [alphabetical order] with Bathrooms: Status:

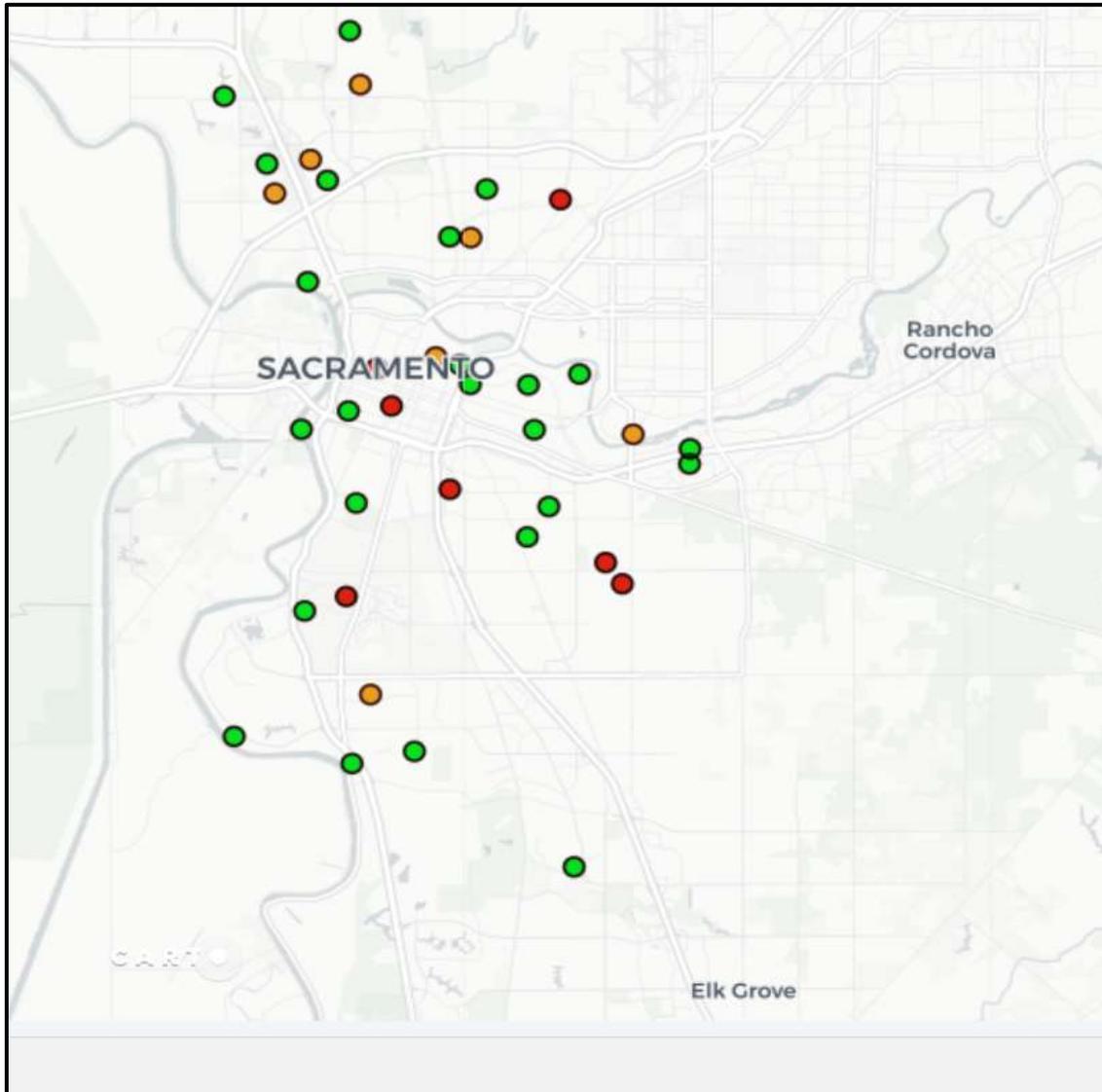
KEY: Yellow = no park/no bathroom; Red = locked bathroom Green = Open bathroom

Park	Region	Status	Hours
Airfield Park	North Natomas	No park	
Argonaut Park	South Sacramento	1 restroom – locked	N/A
Bertha Henschel Park	East Sacramento	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Cabrillo Park	South Sacramento	None	
Carl Johnston Park	North Sacramento	Park closed until further notice	
Caesar Chavez Park	Central City	locked	
Colonial Park	Fruitridge/Broadway	1 restroom	N/A
Conlin Youth Sports Complex Park	South Sacramento	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Earl Warren Park	Fruitridge/Broadway	locked	Sunrise/Sunset
East Portal Park	East Sacramento	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Fremont Park	Central City	Locked	Only open for special events
Garcia Bend Park	Pocket	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Gardenland Park	South Natomas	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Glenbrook Park	East Sacramento	2 restrooms	7 am – 9 pm
Glenn Hall Park	East Sacramento	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Grant Park	Central City	No restroom	N/A
Hagginwood Park	North Sacramento	Locked	7 am – 8 pm
Max Baer Park	Fruitridge/Broadway	Locked	Sunrise/Sunset
McClatchy Park	Fruitridge/Broadway	1 open/1locked	Sunrise/Sunset
McKinley Park	East Sacramento	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Meadowview Park	South Sacramento	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Miller Regional Park	Land Park	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Natomas Oaks Park	South Natomas	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
North Laguna Creek Park	South Sacramento	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
North Natomas Community Park	North Natomas	No bathroom	N/A
Oki Park	East Sacramento	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Red Tail Hawk Park	North Natomas	No bathroom	N/A
Regency Community Park	North Natomas	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Reichmuth Park	Pocket	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Robertson Park	North Sacramento	1 restroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Southside Park	Central City	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
Stanford Park	Central City	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Tahoe Park	Fruitridge/Broadway	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Tanzanite Community Park	North Natomas	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
University Park	Arden-Arcade	No bathroom	N/A
Westlake Community Park	North Natomas	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset
William Land Regional Park	Land Park	2 bathrooms	Sunrise/Sunset
Witter Ranch Park	North Natomas	1 bathroom	Sunrise/Sunset

Figure 2 below is a map of the 38 City's park bathrooms: 24 Open; 7 No park/no bathroom & 7 Locked

Figure 2: Map of 38 Park Bathrooms in Sacramento City

Key: Orange: No park/no bathroom; Red: Closed; Green: Open



SUMMARY

- Of the 38 parks that Sacramento City Parks Department said had bathrooms, 7 or 18.4% of the total had no park [1] or no bathroom [6], leaving 33 parks that have bathrooms;
- Of the 33 parks that had bathrooms, 7 or 21.2% were locked, leaving 24 or 63.2% of the original 38 are open from “sunrise to sunset”:
 - ✓ 100%: no bathroom in Arden-Arcade
 - ✓ 60% locked in Fruitridge/Broadway area
 - ✓ 60% either no bathroom [20%] or locked [40%] in Central City
 - ✓ 42.8% no bathroom in North Natomas
 - ✓ 40% either no bathroom [20%] or locked [20%] in South Sacramento
 - ✓ 33%% locked in North Sacramento area

KEY POINTS

- **No bathrooms open from sunset to sunrise**
- **No/locked bathrooms in areas with high populations of people experiencing homelessness: Central City; Fruitridge/Broadway; North Natomas and South Sacramento**

HUMAN RIGHT TO SAFE WATER & SANITATION

In March 2011 Catrina de Albuquerque, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation, meet with Sacramento authorities and people experiencing homelessness.

She concluded in her January 23, 2012 letter to then Mayor Johnson:

“Because evacuation of the bowels and bladder is a necessary biological function and because denial of opportunities to do so in a lawful and dignified manner can both compromise human dignity and cause suffering, such denial could, in some cases, amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. An immediate and interim solution for those without housing is to ensure access to restroom facilities in public places, including during the night.”

Criminalization of people experiencing homelessness:

She continues that the continued criminalization of homeless people is a violation of article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

“The criminalization of life-sustaining behaviors of homeless persons in public spaces, such as sleeping, camping, or public urination and defecation, in a context of lack of adequate shelter alternatives, has the potential to impede the enjoyment of human rights by poor and vulnerable groups, including the right to an adequate standard of living. The criminalization of public urination and defecation, combined with a lack of public toilets leave the homeless person in a desperate situation and without alternatives.”

She concludes:

“... I call on your government to take the right decision to ensure the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation of the homeless people living in the City of Sacramento, thereby ensuring their life in dignity.

Mayor Johnson never replied to Ms. de Albuquerque.

Assembly Bill 685: Human Right to Water Bill in California:

On September 25, 2012, CA Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 685 to ensure universal access to clean water. The bill statutorily recognizes that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” California became the first state in the nation to legally recognize the human right to water.

AB 65 places the human right to water at the center of state policy and underscores the role of state agencies in efforts to implement the human right to water, according to the International Human Rights Law Clinic, University of CA, Berkeley, School of Law. [The Human Right to Water Bill in CA: An Implementation Framework for State Agencies].

ADDITIONAL SUCCESSFUL MODELS

Portland: Portland Loo:

The Portland Loo was designed by Portland police, fire department and maintenance crews working together to design a public-use toilet that could easily be maintained, while also preventing crime. Each facility costs about \$90,000.

Portland now has 8 of these public bathrooms and more than a dozen cities have installed a total of 34 facilities.



Los Angeles “Skid Row:” Skid Row Community Refresh Center:

Based on the 2017 report by the Los Angeles Central Providers Collaborative, Skid Row Community Residents and Partners [June 2017], *No Place to Go*, which found that from 9 pm to 6 am in Skid Row, there are only nine public toilets available to about 1,800 homeless people, the City allocated \$1.87 million to create the *Skid Row Community Refresh Center*, a hygiene center that includes bathrooms, showers and laundry and is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week with security around the clock.

The audit of public toilets in Skid Row evaluated the accessibility of the toilets based on five factors:

- *Functioning:* toilets are working properly;
- *Maintained:* regularly cleaned and resupplied with toilet paper, soap and paper towels;
- *Public:* there were no entry requirements. People can access the toilets regardless of appearance, sobriety or participation in particular programs;
- *Safe:* in addition to being safe, toilets must adhere to public health standards;
- *Private:* toilets must provide enough privacy to meet needs for human dignity.

In addition to these five factors, toilets were also evaluated on:

- Public signage, including locations and hours;
- Approximate wait times;
- Whether menstrual products were available;
- Whether changing tables for families with young children were available;
- Whether toilets were ADA accessible.

San Francisco & Los Angeles: Lava Mae:

Lava Mae began in San Francisco in 2013 by converting public transportation buses into showers and toilets on wheels to deliver “hygiene and dignity” to people experiencing homelessness and recently expanded to Los Angeles.

San Francisco serves nine locations while in Los Angeles it serves four locations, mostly in downtown “Skid Row” Los Angeles.

Over five years Lava Mae has served over 10,000 guests in SF and LA and provided 35,000+ showers to people experiencing homelessness.



SRCEH RECOMMENDATIONS

Homeless Employment Project: Based on our analysis, SRCEH recommends the following all within the framework of hiring currently homeless people to staff the facilities:

1. Open Caesar Chavez Park bathroom and have it staffed 24/7;
2. Locate Portland style Loo’s in each of the Property Business Improvement Districts;
3. Fund a Sacramento Lava Mae program with a location in each of the 10 areas identified by Sacramento City Parks Department;
4. Fund a 24/7 Hygiene Center based on the Los Angeles Skid Row Model and place in a centrally located close to transportation.

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