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City of Bell – Lessons Learned

Writing in *The Sacramento Bee*, Joe Matthews of [Zócalo Public Square](#) commends the city of Bell's remarkable transformation and examines how state restrictions on local government can lead to municipal corruption. Matthews says local government needs the ability to raise taxes and revenues, which motivate citizens to pay attention to how their local government operates. "So to truly reform local governance, Californians must first recognize a paradox: Preventing local officials from behaving like those in Bell requires giving more discretion and freedom to local officials." For the full piece, please see ["We need to learn the right lessons from Bell to prevent corruption,"](#) *The Sacramento Bee*, March 18, 2015.



WATER: What Cities Need to Know about the Governor's Emergency Drought Relief Package

Gov. Jerry Brown and Legislative leaders on Thursday [announced](#) a \$1 billion emergency drought relief spending package that will accelerate the release of much need funding. Of particular note to cities, the package includes \$267 million for water recycling and drinking water quality projects and programs; \$19.9 million for emergency drinking water; and \$24 million for local food assistance programs. *For more, see Page 2.*



California City Solutions: Cathedral City's Waste Curbed with Myriad of Recycling Choices

This story is part of an ongoing series featuring Helen Putnam Award entries. The 2014 entries are available on the League's website as a resource for cities in a searchable database called [California City Solutions](#). Cathedral City's Waste Management Program was submitted in 2014 for the Planning and Environmental Quality award category.

One small action can make a difference in the world — this is the message that Cathedral City's Environmental Conservation Division (ECD) tries to exemplify with its environmental quality efforts. The city's goal is to divert more than 50 percent waste from local landfills through its Waste Management Program. The multi-faceted initiative comprises Refuse and Recycling, Stop Identity Theft shredding events, the Sharps Disposal by Mail System and several youth-focused recycling and conservation projects. *For more, see Page 3.*

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The emergency drought relief package also includes \$660 million in Proposition 1E funds to assist with essential flood control projects, primarily in the Sacramento Valley and San Joaquin Valley.

The Legislature is planning to vote on the emergency drought relief package next week before they depart for spring recess.

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More than 2,000 years ago, the Cahuilla Indians inhabited what is Cathedral City today. The Agua Caliente Band of the tribe has held 28 percent of the land since 1876. Incorporating in 1981, the city's rugged natural terrain and warm climate attracted residents and its convenient location to Interstate 10 became a draw for relocating businesses. As its population grew, so did the effects of the multiplying manufacturing businesses, only adding to environmental problems that had been plaguing the Coachella Valley for decades.

The city formed the ECD to find solutions to local environmental problems with the diversion of waste from local landfills a top priority. For many years, landfills overflowed with refuse and toxic materials, which released greenhouse gas emissions and compromised air quality. The ECD wanted to develop an ambitious program that would reduce the quantity of debris being dumped into landfills and help improve air quality.

Creating awareness that conservation improves quality of life and engaging residents proved to be one of the most difficult challenges. The city found it hard to educate residents and encourage the entire community to work with the city to reduce its carbon footprint. By adding new waste management programs annually, Cathedral City's environmental conservation and public works manager hopes to inspire residents to make one minor change each day to help improve the environment.

The Waste Management Program developed a number of successful initiatives for residents, including:

- **Refuse and Recycling Program** offers several methods of recycling to residents. A curbside refuse and recycling system, utilizes colored bins to help residents separate trash from green waste and recyclables. The Electronics and Tire Recycling Program, offered every Tuesday, allows residents to drop off old computers, TV's, microwaves and other items for disposal and recycling. Additionally, the Household Hazardous Waste Facility is open every Saturday for disposal of hazardous materials such as antifreeze, used batteries, motor oil and latex paint.
- **Stop Identity Theft** promotes events and educational materials about shredding documents to prevent identity thief. On a monthly basis from October through May, a shredding truck is available at a local parking lot for residents to use. Large containers are supplied and designated for confidential paper documents at all senior housing communities in the city, as the city's research shows that 10 percent of identity theft victims are over the age of 60. A shredding truck visits senior communities on a bi-weekly basis and documents are shredded onsite and recycled for future use.
- **Sharps Disposal by Mail** is the nation's first city-run free and convenient mail-back system allowing legal self-injectors a safe way to dispose of needles, lancets and syringes. With the cooperation of local pharmacies, legal self-injectors receive a box to place used needles and ship them to a facility that will responsibly dispose of the materials.

- **Student Creative Recycling Art Program (S.C.R.A.P.) Gallery** teaches students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 about environmental issues by making art from discarded materials, discovering creative ways to conserve resources and recycle.

The city worked with ECD to create a [Refuse and Recycling Guide](#) of the city's distinctive waste management programs. Available in English and Spanish, the guide allows families and individuals to choose programs that fit best into their daily routines. ECD also annually publishes an Environmental Calendar with information and dates about environmental events for participation.

Quantitative figures resulting from these waste management programs have shown that even the smallest change in a daily routine can have a significant impact. The curbside recycling program alone has seen a 75 percent increase, while some 350 businesses donated recycled paints, scraps and materials to art projects diverting more than 750,000 tons of trash from reaching the municipal waste stream.

ECD's Stop Identity Theft shredding has not only cut down on the amount of weight in local landfills, it raised awareness on taking steps to prevent becoming a victim of identity theft. More than 32,000 pounds of shredded paper have been recycled to date. Shredded paper from the monthly Stop Identity Theft event and senior communities is sold to recycling facilities that recycle the paper to be used for dry-wall, benches and innovative products, as well as more traditional recycled paper products. Onsite shredding services are available as several other Coachella Valley cities are now hosting shredding events.

The Sharps Disposal by Mail program allowed for the safe and proper disposal of approximately 450,000 needles. A TakeAway program was added, using a similar model to properly dispose of prescription medications that are outdated or ready to be discarded, keeping potentially harmful and toxic waste from landfills.

Studying at the S.C.R.A.P. Gallery inspired local youth to work with principals and teachers to craft a school recycling program and community garden. Bins and signs are provided by ECD for recycling, while students manage the program. Learning how to tend to the school and community gardens teaches students to reduce consumption of processed and packaged foods, thereby decreasing the amount of paper, plastic containers and wrappers reaching trash bins and landfills.

Effective partnerships are essential to the success of Cathedral City's waste management plan. ECD partners with Burrtec Recycling & Services and Cintas shredding to insure that waste materials are repurposed in a quick and economical manner. Cathedral City works with the California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery on waste diversion rules and the state's Air Resources Board on air quality management, whose support during the past seven years has made it possible for ECD to implement diverse environmental projects. The Environmental Conservation and Public Works Department collaborates with the city council, as well as other departments, and community members to create a diverse and highly effective waste management program.

Loan Applications Due Soon for Veterans' Housing Program

Applications are due April 20 for \$75 million in Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program loans. These will mark the first installment of about \$545 million in Proposition 41 funding set to be lent out over 15 years.

Loans up to \$10 million per project will go toward developing affordable multifamily rental housing containing permanent supportive housing, transitional housing or affordable housing units for veterans and their families. Supportive or transitional housing is restricted to households experiencing homelessness.

The Department of Housing and Community Development released a [notice of funding availability](#) on Feb. 20, following the completion of [program guidelines](#) on Feb. 18.

Eligibility

Borrowers can include local public entities, as well as individuals, joint ventures, partnerships, limited partnerships, trusts, corporations, limited liability companies, tribal governments, or a combination of those, on a for-, limited- or nonprofit basis.

Among other requirements, projects must:

- Involve the acquisition or construction or rehabilitation of an affordable rental housing development or transitional housing or the conversion of an existing structure to suit those purposes; and
- Restrict at least 45 percent of assisted units to extremely low-income veterans, with rent not exceeding 30 percent of area median income.

For supportive or transitional housing, projects must use a lead service provider with experience that includes comprehensive case management: individualized assistance with mental health, substance abuse, employment, health, housing retention and similar services, and which adheres to housing-first property management and tenant selection.

Housing first programs provide immediate access to chronically homeless individuals and families or vulnerable homeless individuals and families, then supportive services with the goal of moving individuals and families into long-term, stable housing.

Scoring criteria for the loans includes development team experience, supportive housing units, services plan, leveraging of development funding, leveraging of rental or operating subsidies, readiness to proceed and confirmation of local need.

The program seeks to split the funding between eligible programs by region, with not less than:

- 31 percent (about \$23.5 million) to projects within Los Angeles County;
- 14 percent (about \$10.5 million) for projects located within Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz or Sonoma counties;
- 8 percent (about \$6 million) for projects within Orange, Riverside or San Bernardino counties;
- 7 percent (about \$5.25 million) for projects within San Diego County; and
- 16 percent (about \$12 million) for projects in other counties.

Program history

In 2008, voters approved Prop. 12. It authorized \$900 million in general obligation bonds to help veterans purchase single-family homes, farms and mobile homes.

The onset of the recession and the state's housing downturn are blamed for the demand falling short of what was projected, despite California's largest-in-the-union 1.8 million population of veterans. In 2013, AB 639 (Pérez) restructured the 2008 bond act, authorizing \$600 million to fund multifamily housing for veterans. In 2014, voters backed the change, approving Prop. 41 with better than 65 percent of the vote.

Under Prop. 41, about \$50 million in general tax revenues will be allocated annually for 15 years. Nearly 15,000 veterans experience homelessness in California on a given night — 26 percent of the nation's homeless veterans, according to the Department of Housing and Community Development. Of the state's low-income veteran households in rental homes, 79 percent spend more than half of their incomes on housing.

HCD has posted more information [online](#). Questions can be directed to VHHP staff at (916) 263-2771.

Upcoming Legislative Hearings of Interest March 24-April 22

The League's lobbying team continues to review the flood of bills introduced before the Feb. 27 deadline, determining which of them may be of significant interest to cities. As the Legislature begins to assign legislation to policy committees, it is also holding a number of oversight and informational hearings on policy areas of interest to cities. In the coming weeks, the League will issue its first Priority Bills list.

Here are a number of upcoming hearings of interest:

March 24

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration**, State Capitol, Room 447, 1:30 p.m.
 - Hearing will cover a number of items including the Public Employees' Retirement System

March 25

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources and Transportation**, State Capitol, Room 447, 9 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover a number of items including Department of Transportation, High-Speed Rail Authority and the California Transportation Commission
- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5 on Public Safety**, State Capitol, Room 437, 1:30 p.m.
 - Hearing will cover 2014 Drought Funding
- **Joint Hearing, Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments and Assembly Elections and Redistricting**, State Capitol, Room 3191, 1:30 p.m.
 - Oversight Hearing: Statewide Voter Turnout

March 26

- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and Transportation**, State Capitol, Room 112, 9:30 a.m.
 - Oversight Hearing: Cap-and-Trade including the Strategic Growth Council and Oversight on High-Speed Rail Authority
- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary**, State Capitol, Room 113, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover Oversight on Proposition 47
- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration and General Government**, Room 2040, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover State Finance, including Oversight on the Debt and Financial Management Overview, the State Treasurer, California Alternative Energy and Advanced Transportation Financing Authority, the Department of Finance, Oversight on Tax Compliance Programs and more

April 7

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration**, State Capitol, Room 447, 1:30 p.m.
 - Hearing will cover Department of Housing and Community Development and Commission on State Mandates

April 8

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources and Transportation**, State Capitol, Room 126, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover Climate Change

April 9

- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration and General Government**, Room 2040, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover items related to Local Government and Economic Development, including Redevelopment Agencies Dissolution Status and Issues, the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development and the Commission on State Mandates
- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 5 on Corrections, Public Safety and the Judiciary**, State Capitol, Room 113, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover Public Employees' Retirement System

April 14

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration**, State Capitol, Room 447, 1:30 p.m.
 - Hearing will cover the State Controller's Office and Secretary of State

April 15

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Resources and Transportation**, State Capitol, Room 447, 9 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover items related to the Air Resources Board, California Coastal Commission and the Office of Planning and Research
- **Senate Environmental Quality Committee**, State Capitol, Room 3191, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover Overview of the California Environmental Quality Act: record of proceedings

April 16

- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection, Energy and Transportation**, State Capitol, Room 112, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover the LAO's Overview of the Transportation Budget, the California Transportation Commission and the Department of Transportation
- **Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 4 on State Administration and General Government**, Room 2040, 9:30 a.m.
 - Hearing will cover a number of items related to the State Controller and a Financial Information System for California

April 22

- **Assembly Budget Subcommittee No.5 on Public Safety**, State Capitol, Room 437, 1:30 p.m.
 - Hearing will cover the Prop. 47 workload
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