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The windows to prison have always been dark tinted to the public. Too many oppressive secrets that reside behind these walls represent the face of torture. Real time experience offers insight to what’s effective as well as what’s ineffective. Good policy comes from experience, not a book.

- Duane Palm, CURB Inside Advocate, Wasco State Prison
The U.S. is home to the world’s largest imprisoned population, and California has the second largest imprisoned population in the country.¹

The Close California Prisons campaign, anchored by Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB), believes that as California led the country in a prison construction boom, our state should lead the way in undoing past wrongs by closing prisons and investing in communities - and we now have an unprecedented opportunity to do so.

Prisons are traumatic, unhealthy, dangerous places that lead to lasting physical and emotional health impacts for incarcerated individuals, their families, and the people that work in these facilities. Our society’s incarceration practices have generated a serious, deadly overcapacity issue in California’s prisons, which have only been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Governor Newsom’s 2022-23 Corrections budget makes it clear that in addition to the prison closures of Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI), California Correctional Center (CCC), Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) and the termination of CDCR’s contract with California City Correctional Facility (CAC), at least three more prisons can be closed by 2025.² Outside of the prisons named for complete closure, CDCR has announced the deactivation of specific facilities in six additional prisons.³ The possibility of more prison closures has long been supported by all available data, including a February 2021 report produced by the state’s own nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2021-22 Budget: Prison Maintenance and Repair Proposals.

This report lays out a roadmap for closing California prisons, while simultaneously supporting the communities impacted by incarceration and the towns where prisons will be closed.

We illustrate a decarcelar just transition whereby California can support any city or town with a prison in shifting the local economy and community away from a perceived reliance on incarceration, and toward healthy and life-affirming investments and infrastructure.

We also draw on instances where states have successfully closed some prisons while reinvesting funding and resources into the communities affected by the closures. For instance, in just 12 years from 2011 to 2022, New York closed 24 prisons across the state. This report points to case studies of correctional facilities that have closed, describes the process for closure, identifies the alternative funding streams to communities impacted by the closures, and the outcomes today. We show through this report that prison closures are not only possible, but will also greatly benefit the economy, job sectors, public health, and the environment of cities and communities.

This Prison Closure Roadmap is broken down into five stages:

1. Selecting a Prison for Closure
2. Depopulation and Closure of the Prison
3. Envisioning & Funding a Decarcelar Just Transition
4. Prison Repurposing
5. Outcomes of a Post-Prison Community
II. SELECTING PRISONS FOR CLOSURE

"Prison does not prevent harm. Prisons just stop you from progressing and prevent you from being valued as a person. When we close prisons, we're opening up other doors."

- Jo' an Dunn, California Medical Facility
SELECTING PRISONS FOR CLOSURE

Many factors can be considered when identifying which prisons should close. The Budget Act of 2018 offered some initial criteria for prison closure, which are now found in Penal Code section §5003.7.

This includes operational costs, workforce impacts, subpopulation and gender-specific housing needs, long-term investments in facilities, public safety and rehabilitation, and the ability to continue to address prison overcrowding. However, analysts that have undertaken such assessments rarely include the input of the people most deeply impacted: those who are caged inside of the prisons.

In 2021, Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) released The People’s Plan for Prison Closure, a report providing criteria for how to prioritize which prisons to close. Based on the criteria, CURB identified 10 state-owned prisons as priorities to close by 2025.

CURB’s assessments and recommendations for closure are rooted in feedback from the people who experience the injustices and harm of California prisons on a daily basis – imprisoned people and their family members who are directly impacted by incarceration. Based on surveys from 2,386 systems-impacted people, with representation from every prison in the state, these are the top five criteria for prison closure:

- **Unsafe health conditions** (i.e. water contamination and poison, asbestos, mold, etc.)
- **Most overcrowded**
- **The cost of incarceration**
- **Location of the prison and distance from loved ones** (include inaccessible travel)
- **Highest number of homicides and suicides**
Based on these five criteria, CURB recommends these ten state-owned prisons to be prioritized for closure by 2025:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Prison Name</th>
<th>Design Capacity</th>
<th>Current Overcrowding</th>
<th>Active Projects</th>
<th>Proposed &amp; Future Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>California Rehabilitation Center</td>
<td>2,380</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>$13.7M</td>
<td>$10M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kern Valley State Prison</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>126.1%</td>
<td>$11.9M</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pleasant Valley State Prison</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>112.0%</td>
<td>$63M</td>
<td>$30M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>California Correctional Facility</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>140.1%</td>
<td>$66.2M</td>
<td>$191M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>North Kern State Prison</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>157.3%</td>
<td>$71.8M</td>
<td>$65.2M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility</td>
<td>3,424</td>
<td>129.8%</td>
<td>$79.5M</td>
<td>$38.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>California State Prison - LA County</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>114.1%</td>
<td>$46.5M</td>
<td>$22.7M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>California Medical Facility</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>$5.5M</td>
<td>$187.6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Avenal State Prison</td>
<td>2,909</td>
<td>139.1%</td>
<td>$17.2M</td>
<td>$35.4M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>California Men's Colony</td>
<td>3,816</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>$122M</td>
<td>$180M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,769</strong></td>
<td><strong>N/A</strong></td>
<td><strong>$497.3M</strong></td>
<td><strong>$760.3M</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Closing the ten prisons listed in Figure 1 would yield an estimated cost savings of approximately $1.3 billion in infrastructure and capital outlay spending, in addition to $1.5 billion in prison operating expenses annually.

Of the six yards CDCR recently named for deactivation, three belong to prisons that were identified as priorities for closure in The People’s Plan for Prison Closure: California Rehabilitation Center, California Correctional Institution, and California Men’s Colony. These prisons require a combined $583 million in active and future maintenance costs.

CDCR claims yard closures may be more effective than full prison closures in case “a significant need for capacity arise(s) in the future due to a natural disaster or other serious need.” They offer that yard closure gives the state the possibility to re-activate these facilities at a later date. Given the high cost of maintaining deactivated yards and facilities, the ongoing and documented decrease in the prison population, and criminal justice reform that will reduce future incarceration, it is demonstrably less fiscally responsible to simply shut down some facilities within these prisons rather than the entire prison itself.
I’ve been transferred all over the state, from Pelican Bay to RJ Donovan (and several prisons in between), over the past 32 years of incarceration. I hate transfers and bus rides within CDCR, which are so disruptive and disorienting to incarcerated people.

- Jennifer Rose, Salinas State Prison
In 2011, the Supreme Court upheld a ruling that prisons would be required to reduce overcrowding to 137.5% of design capacity within two years. This ruling was accompanied by legislation allowing for widespread resentencing, an increased demand for just alternatives to incarceration, and recognition from the legislature that prisons waste billions of state dollars per year. These initiatives caused a downward trend in prison populations, which is expected to continue over the next decade according to the LAO, and even CDCR's own conservative projections. As the prison population continues to decrease and prison cells continue to empty, the enormous cost of operating these cells becomes increasingly wasteful and the need to close prisons grows stronger.

A. Prison Depopulation: Past Legislation & Ongoing Implementation

Over the past decade, Californians have worked diligently to shift public safety paradigms and policies to prioritize care over punishment. The legislature has done a great deal of work passing bills that promote depopulation in California prisons, and we want to applaud that work. While these bills are big wins related to depopulation efforts, implementation is often lacking. This means that there are people who have been legally determined to be eligible for release but remain incarcerated.

One reason for inadequate implementation of decarceral policies is a lack of funding for public defenders. Public defenders are a vital part of the process in successful resentencing hearings. Allocating additional funding would allow counties to employ more public defenders who could take on resentencing cases, eventually saving the county funds as a result of releasing people who are currently unnecessarily incarcerated.

Some examples of legislative accomplishments and their impacts include the following:

- **The RISE Act**
  Retroactively repeals one-year and three-year sentence enhancements;

- **Elderly Parole Program**
  Improves the elderly parole program;

- **Sentence Reductions**
  Decreases sentences for accomplice offenses, and SB 775 (Becker-2021) modified SB 1437 to include people who were originally ineligible for resentencing under the policy;

- **Public Safety & Rehabilitation**
  Provides credits for participation in rehabilitative programing as well as a parole process for those convicted of nonviolent charges; and

- **Safe Neighborhoods & Schools**
  Recategorized non-violent felonies as misdemeanor convictions.
B. Prison Depopulation: Future Possibilities for New Legislation

In addition to implementing policies that have already been passed, there remains an opportunity to reverse some of California’s most draconian sentencing laws.

One option is to repeal the California Three Strikes Law, which automatically triggers a life sentence after a person is convicted of three felonies. There are currently 33,000 people in California’s prisons whose sentences were enhanced by this law, of which 80% are Black, Brown or indigenous people. There are a plethora of draconian sentencing enhancement laws to reverse in addition to ending the Three Strikes Law.

Sentencing enhancements are often applied to convictions leading to lengthy, futile sentences. Gun enhancements typically add 10 to 25 years to a person’s sentence, and gang affiliation enhancements add anywhere from two to 15 years to a person’s sentence. New bills advancing population reduction and ending superfluous sentences should focus on repealing enhancements.

Alternatively, rather than working to repeal enhancements one by one, it may be beneficial and productive to push forward legislation that caps sentences for a variety of convictions, which could eliminate many of these harmful enhancement laws at once.
After a prison has been named for closure, CDCR must create a plan for those incarcerated in the prison. The first step in creating this plan should be an assessment of eligibility for release. As stated previously, there are many people who are currently incarcerated that are eligible for a resentencing hearing or potential release under recently passed legislation. Allocating funding for additional public defenders in counties where prisons are selected for closure would allow those counties’ legal systems to determine which members of the prison population are eligible for release and, as a result, would reduce the need for transfers. More releases – not transfers – of incarcerated people must be prioritized.

After CDCR has determined who can be released from the prison scheduled for closure, it should work diligently to create individualized re-entry plans for successful transition back into the community—including permanent housing, reliable income and employment, a supportive community, access to mental health care, medical care and substance use services. The legislature should establish mechanisms for community-based organizations to obtain funding to serve those leaving incarceration, create partnerships with current providers and create plans for new program development when necessary.

While the ultimate goal of prison closures is to release those who are incarcerated back into their community and to their loved ones, in some cases, the transfer of individuals to other prisons cannot be avoided. In these cases, the legislature can play a vital role in minimizing the harmful effects of transfers on people who are being transferred and their families. Opportunities to mitigate the harm resulting from transfers include the following:

**Ensure prison closures occur within one year.**

While the passage of AB 200 omnibus might create the possibility for smoother prison closures in the future, previous closures have been lengthy, which has led to harm for those incarcerated. They have faced intense retaliation from staff and inhumane conditions such as extended periods of time without water and electricity. Throughout the CCC closure, people incarcerated in CCC have been forced to create their own solutions to flooding (such as filling cracks in ceilings and floors with soap), forced to use toilets that do not flush and are filled with green bacteria, and exposed to black mold growth. To avoid inflicting these harms again, a plan to minimize the timeline for closure must be developed. A timely closure of the prison benefits the people incarcerated, California taxpayers, and all other parties involved.
Incarcerated people who are transferred instead of released require as much autonomy over the process as possible.

When people are incarcerated in places where they have better access to supportive systems, including family and growth programs, it promotes stability during their time incarcerated and decreases rates of recidivism when they are eventually released. In the recent announcement of additional closures, CDCR stated that “incarcerated people in the impacted prisons and facilities will be transferred to other institutions or yards based on their housing, custody and rehabilitative needs” but did not provide details on how needs will be determined or language that indicates autonomy within the process. People being transferred will have different motivations for where they would like to be transferred, mostly rooted in their overall wellness. Some people may want to prioritize being moved to a prison in close geographic location to family so their children can visit them. Others may prioritize the location of their transfer based on a prison’s programming offerings, including education and substance use support. CDCR has rightly affirmed that an incarcerated individual's rehabilitative, educational, and self-help program credits will transfer with them. One way to respect and support people’s preference for transfer is through a survey. Each person who is not eligible for release may be given a survey requesting information on their transfer needs. Based on those needs, a transfer plan may be created and implemented within a healthy timeline.

The state is responsible for ensuring that unavoidable transfers are safe, do not negatively impact the individual's medical or mental health care, and do not result in property loss or damage.

Failures to account for incarcerated individuals' health and wellness needs can have devastating impacts; for instance, the transfer of an incarcerated person to a prison with substandard medical care can lead to increased illness and even death. The Health Care Department of Operations Manual Chapter 3 Article 1, Section 9 states that CDCR should ensure continuity of care when a person is transferred. However, the terrible consequences of mismanaged transfers were clearly documented during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Transfers also lead to lost or damaged personal property. This can be avoided with competent preparation. The legislature has the opportunity to enshrine guidelines to ensure that these mistakes are not repeated during future prison closure processes.

CDCR should develop a plan to mitigate the potential negative consequences of yard closures, with input from incarcerated individuals.

CURB remains concerned about the unknown future effects stemming from the closure of the Folsom Women’s Facility; Facility C in Pelican Bay State Prison; West Facility in California Men’s Colony; Facility A in California Rehabilitation Center; Facility D in California Institution for Men; and Facility D in California Correctional Institution. Previously when facilities like these have closed and there has been forced integration of yards, it has led to an increased level of violence for people who are incarcerated. There is also a fiscal concern regarding facility closures. CDCR has provided scant evidence that the fiscal impact of closing only parts of a prison would outweigh the benefit of selecting an entire prison to shut down. CURB will be closely monitoring the fiscal and human impacts of yard closures in prisons across California.
It is important to me that California close and decarcerate its prisons because the myth of prisons being a place of rehabilitation is not based on facts. The facts are they lock us up long enough that our family members forget about us, especially the young ones.

- Anonymous, Pelican Bay State Prison
Decarceral Just Transition: Support for Impacted Communities

California has a historic opportunity to transform its carceral landscape by implementing a decarceral just transition: a framework developed to aid in the economic shift away from extractive economies and oppressive systems, towards more sustainable, regenerative economies and systems of care. By closing prisons, the state not only has the chance to decrease its harmful and wasteful reliance on punitive systems: it can also begin to reinvest in communities in creative and revitalizing ways. Far from hurting local economies, closing prisons offers a pathway to improve the infrastructure of communities and increase safety. A strategic plan to administer prison closure should include the following components.

Support for People Leaving Prison

Following the Alternatives to Incarceration Workgroup's "Care First, Jails Last" Model

The size of California’s imprisoned population is expected to decrease by 3% between 2023 and 2024. This projection is the result of bold action by the legislature to enact policies that will reduce sentences and allow people to return to their communities. As previously incarcerated people continue to return home in increasing numbers, it is becoming progressively critical that the State makes substantial investments in the communities to which people are returning.

In addressing the returning population’s needs, community involvement or “community visioning” is essential, since members of impacted communities are best positioned to understand whether proposed solutions will be effective. The Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) Workgroup serves as an excellent model. ATI’s final recommendations were generated or supported by Community Engagement workshops, which were attended by over 450 community members, many of them formerly incarcerated.

The ATI Workgroup calls for behavioral health responses for individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse disorders, homelessness, and other situations caused by unmet needs. The workgroup report, “Care First, Jails Last,” recommends that law enforcement not be involved in these responses. Recommendation #34 calls for the provision of comprehensive community-based reentry services across the county.
Examples of such services include:

- Temporary financial aid for basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, transportation)
- Assistance to secure legal identification and to enroll in benefit programs (e.g., Medi-Cal, General Relief, SNAP)
- Life skills classes (budgeting, etc.)
- Connections to mental health & substance abuse treatment services
- Job training and placement with specialized training for employment in reentry programs (with career pathway options)
- Advocacy opportunities to change rules that bar formerly incarcerated individuals from applying for certain professional certifications
- Assistance to find housing

Services like these must be implemented at the county level to meet the needs of individuals returning from state prisons. Many of these services can be provided by existing community treatment facilities, which should be resourced to scale up and incentivized to serve formerly incarcerated clients (Recommendation #69). Where not pre-existing, these services should be established.

The ATI report not only insists on the availability of these services, but also sets important quality standards. Elaborating on the issue of housing, for example, the ATI report asserts that, upon release, people need to be guided to opportunities for transition shelter operated by community-based organizations “with safe, welcoming overnight stays for people released after hours with a range of support.” The ATI workgroup recommends, in addition, the creation of “shelter beds for people identifying as LGBQ+, TGI, and/or cisgender women, so they do not have to remain in incarceration for a safe transition to the community” (Recommendation #71). The full set of recommendations of the ATI report warrants thorough review. Fulfillment of such recommendations across the state will require extensive community consultation with formerly incarcerated people and members of the communities to which they are returning.

On December 6, 2022 CDCR announced a $500 million Community Economic Resiliency Fund (CERF) and a $1 million Rapid Response grant dedicated to communities impacted by prison closure. The goals of these funds fall directly in line with what has been described in this roadmap. We advocate for these funds to not only be dedicated to the community where the prison will close and to the employees of that prison, but also to the communities to which previously incarcerated individuals return.

Among the many communities that stand to benefit from prison closure are the surrounding areas in which the prison is located. Guided by the needs of those communities, this roadmap suggests multiple pathways for a just transition for all people who may be economically impacted by the closure of a prison. Many of these communities have borne the brunt of the harmful impacts of incarceration. Thus, funding and financial incentives should be directed toward these communities in order to support industry, establish community resources, and develop infrastructure that does not involve incarceration or law enforcement.

The Geography of Incarceration in California

In August 2022, Essie Justice Group and Prison Policy Initiative produced the report “Where People in Prison Come From.” Using 2020 census data, the report is a powerful tool to identify areas in need of reentry services, programming that prevents criminal legal system involvement, and enhanced public safety through programs and services. Some of the community needs identified in that report are:

- Community & mental health: Nationwide, higher rates of incarceration are associated with lowered life expectancy. They are also associated with increased numbers of drug-related deaths.

- Education: Higher rates of incarceration are found to be associated with diminished education experiences.

- Environmental restoration: People who grow up in US census tracts subject to greater air pollution and housing-related lead have a greater chance of being incarcerated as adults, according to a 2021 study. Studies have found associations between neighborhood incarceration and asthma.

- Community resources & engagement: This includes solutions that keep communities safe including substance abuse and harm reduction services, trauma recovery centers, and violence prevention programs.

These point to areas for community visioning processes in which appropriate responses may be developed to address the root causes of incarceration. It is imperative that we prioritize funding for community-based organizations and community leaders working to advance housing justice, economic justice, health and family justice, and environmental justice in California.
Funding Strategies for Communities Impacted by Prison Closures

Financial support for communities impacted by prison closure can help local governments respond to unmet needs that may have forced reliance on a prison economy in the first place. Financial support is an important element in a plan to reorient the local economy post-closure.

An equally important aim, however, is to direct funding to marginalized communities who have been most impacted by the state’s reliance on prisons as an answer to public safety. Dense populations such as Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange counties are most affected but there are also less populous counties in the state that have high incarceration rates. These include Del Norte, Siskiyou, Shasta, Tehama, Lake, Yuba, Kings and Tulare. High incarceration rates have been found to correlate with lower life expectancy, poor community and mental health, exposure to environmental dangers, under-resourced educational institutions, low levels of resources generally, and low community engagement. Ending reliance on incarceration as a strategy for “management” of under-resourced communities means mobilizing funds – including savings from closures – to address these problems.

To this end, CURB proposes a two-tiered funding structure.

- **Tier 1:** would be modeled off of an innovative New York Economic Transformation program that provided redevelopment grants for the repurposing of prison infrastructure and tax credits to businesses that created jobs within the community. The program helped leverage private-sector investments to create jobs and support initiatives that helped transform the economies within four prison towns.

- **Tier 2:** would be to prioritize the communities where a prison is closing to be first in line to receive existing economic investments developed under the Newsom administration such as climate action resources, Project Homekey and additional industry-based incentives.
Innovative Redevelopment Grants:

CURB recommends an Economic Transformation pilot program for counties impacted by prison closures, which is based on an innovative model in the state of New York that promoted economic development initiatives in communities affected by the July 2014 closure of four state prison facilities. This program awarded a total of $32 million to the areas surrounding four prisons that were closed. The funds were divided equally, so each area received $8 million.

Economic Transformation funds assisted with construction, expansion and rehabilitation of facilities; acquisition of machinery and equipment; working capital; and the training of full-time permanent employees. Funds were also used for real estate and acquisition; demolition; construction and renovations; site and infrastructure; inventory; construction-related planning; and design.

The proposed CA Redevelopment Grants would exclude any proposals to convert an existing state prison facility into a federal prison, county jail, detention center or other institution designed to imprison people. It should be noted that this exclusion also pertains to “medical health treatment centers,” which is a term that has increasingly been used for facilities that are effectively prisons, in that they are run by correctional staff, rather than being under the management of qualified health personnel.

Tax Credits:

Based on New York’s Economic Transformation and Facility Redevelopment Program tax credit, firms in targeted industries that create at least five net new jobs would qualify for up to five fully refundable tax benefits:

1. Job tax credit of 6.85% of wages of each net new job.

2. An investment tax credit of 6% of capital investments, with the credit increasing to 10% if it is at the site of a closed facility. This credit is capped at $4 million per firm for investments outside the facility and $8 million for all investments at the facility.

3. A real property tax credit of 25% of eligible property taxes in the first year, phasing down to 5% in year five. The credit is 50% of eligible property taxes for firms located at the facility, phasing down to 10% in year 5.

4. A job training tax credit of 50% of training expenses, capped at $4,000 per eligible employee per year. Eligibility for this credit is limited to instances where former facility employees are hired by a new firm.

5. A sales tax refund on tangible personal property used for construction at eligible sites.

CURB proposes that the CA Innovative Redevelopment Grants for the repurposing of prison infrastructure grant allocations be based on the bed capacity of the state prison slated for closure.
A Just Transition for Impacted Communities and Workers:
Among the many communities that stand to benefit from prison closure is the community in which the prison is located. Guided by the needs of those communities, our pilot program creates multiple pathways for a just transition for all people who may be economically impacted by the closure of a prison, and support for communities historically marginalized by incarceration. Tier 2 investments outlined in this pilot proposal would prioritize towns impacted by prison closure to receive funding from existing economic investments that Governor Newsom is championing in this budget cycle, especially those allocated to build sustainable, green economies, improve public health outcomes, and respond to the climate crisis. These investments would bring jobs into the community and stimulate positive, diverse economic growth, increasing opportunities for all people to benefit by the closure of a prison in their town.

- **Climate Action:** Communities impacted by prison closure should be prioritized for Governor Newsom’s $15 billion Climate Action investments. Governor Newsom’s plan emphasizes the need for these Climate Action investments to support disadvantaged communities. Given that disadvantaged communities are disproportionately impacted by incarceration and that prisons have severe and detrimental impacts on the environment, CURB recommends that communities impacted by prison closure be prioritized for receiving the following Climate Action funds: Wildfire and Forest Resilience; Water and Drought Resilience; Climate Resilience; Climate Smart Agriculture; and Zone-Emission Vehicle.

- **New Homekey Projects:** Building off of Project Roomkey, Homekey is a statewide effort to sustain and rapidly expand housing for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, and who are, thereby, inherently impacted by COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), approximately $1.4 billion (FY 2021-22) in grant funding will be made available to local public entities, including cities, counties, or other local public entities, such as housing authorities or Tribal Entities within California. CURB recommends Homekey projects be prioritized for communities impacted by prison closure.

- **Community Mental Health Services Block Grant:** The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) provides grant funds to establish or expand an organized community-based system of care for providing non-Title XIX (Medicaid) mental health services to children with serious emotional disturbances (SED) and adults with serious mental illness (SMI). CURB recommends CMHS community based mental health block grants be prioritized for communities impacted by the incarcerated crisis (see paragraph two of this section). It is important that these funds are not allocated to projects employing correctional staff, nor should correctional staff become mental health workers. This is to ensure a break with the institutional culture of the prison and to help ensure that mental health providers are those best suited to the role.
• CA Financial Incentives: The state of California offers financial incentives and grant opportunities for a number of industries to help promote small business, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure development, among other priorities. CURB recommends that projects, businesses, or industries proposed or operating in communities where a prison closure is slated for closure be prioritized for these financial incentives and awards, particularly in the areas of energy and environment, new employment, and recycling. An example of these financial incentives are the recently announced CERF and Rapid Response funds dedicated to Lassen County. The leaders of this funding are the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, GO-Biz, OPR and No-RTEC. The aim of these funds has been identified as:

- Identify the factors, industry clusters and other opportunities to influence the local economic conditions and identify sustainable ways to track changes to key economic indicators within Lassen County.
- Forecast displacement of current jobs based on the rate of transitions within the county based on the prison closure.
- Identify emerging industries that can utilize Lassen's existing competitive advantages to thrive.
- Identify skills gaps in the existing workforce that are barriers for transitioning into new industries.
- Identify ways to train and transition workers to emerging industries.

CURB supports these goals as part of a community-led process that centers environmental and social justice organizations. This roadmap encourages this model to be duplicated for all communities where prisons are named for closure, communities impacted by mass incarceration, and communities where people who were previously incarcerated will be returning to. Ideally, as we move forward with additional closures, funding saved from previous closures will be dedicated to these efforts.
PRISON REPURPOSING

“With the closure of prisons there will be additional funds to reinvest within the communities for education, vocational [training], housing, counseling and rehabilitative programs. For many decades, incarceration was the answer but the results failed. It’s time for a different method to solve the problem.”

- Chris Diep, CTF-Soledad
In California, previous prison closures have employed “warm shutdowns” in which staff and funding are allocated for the continuation and maintenance of basic facility operations. To date, CDCR operates seven closed facilities in warm shutdown mode across the state, costing millions of dollars. For instance, the cost to operate DVI prison in warm shutdown mode is approximately $2.2 million per year indefinitely. These are funds that could otherwise be spent on the life-affirming services that Californians need. Immediate planning for the site avoids such wasteful expenditure of state resources, prevents the site from getting caught in a dysfunctional surplus sales system, and ensures full closure of the facility to maximize the potential community benefit of the land. Now is the time for the state to take action by deactivating its prisons and reusing them for valuable and generative purposes.

Prison Repurposing is An Emerging Practice Across the United States

In a national study, The Sentencing Project found that 21 states partially closed or fully closed at least one correctional facility since 2000 and reduced correctional capacity by over 81,000 beds, resulting in a prison repurposing trend that converted old prisons for community and commercial use.

Intentional and immediate post-closure planning is increasingly recognized as essential to realizing a site’s potential benefit for the community in which it is located. Recent developments serve as examples for permanently closing state prisons and planning for their reuse. New York state has devoted its Prison Redevelopment Commission to this aim, while Michigan, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia have also taken up post-closure planning in various ways.
Community visioning empowers communities living near closed prisons to decide what will replace the prison and how the local economy can best be supported by its repurposing.

- Clear priorities: In order to develop a site’s potential benefit, state and local policymakers should set priorities and requirements for occupants of the land early on and in alignment with community needs.
- Community consultations: Identification of these needs will clearly entail consultation with the community. Visioning consultations should be iterative and work towards building community consensus for a particular land use.
- User-friendly documentation: A framework and budget as well as a user-friendly guiding document are necessary outputs. This forms the basis for decisions made later in the process.

One such visioning consultation process in Washtenaw County, Michigan in 2011 identified affordable housing as a need. The Platt Road Community Advisory Committee was established, and a planning process was initiated to involve community members in brainstorming designs consistent with the committee’s recommendations. The result was the Veridian at County Farm, which included 50 affordable housing units in addition to fulfilling other community needs that were identified in the process, such as environmental sustainability and community-building infrastructure. The Washtenaw County repurposing process exemplifies the importance of educational discussions (in addition to the budget and guiding document) in planning meetings to facilitate partnership with community members, which is a condition for success.
The majority of state-owned prisons are located on indigenous land. Representation of indigenous communities is central to prison repurposing projects. The aggregate imprisonment rate for all reservation and trust land is 534 per 100,000 (versus an overall state rate of 310 per 100,000). There are 21 reservations and off-site trust lands that fall within a 20-mile radius of a state prison. Six of these have incarceration rates higher than 1,000 per 100,000. Indigenous communities should be consulted throughout the repurposing project to ensure that they benefit from its transformation.

Policymakers must also be prepared to confront land-reuse challenges. As an example of a land-reuse challenge, consider that many California state prisons are sited on land subject to severe and often toxic environmental degradation. Fortunately, however, even severe forms of degradation (e.g., those of decommissioned nuclear plants) may be restored to prior conditions if the appropriate reclamation measures are taken.

Federal Sources for Prison Repurposing Financing

It should be noted that there are funding sources at the federal level for jurisdictions seeking to repurpose prisons. For example, areas with populations below 20,000 may seek funding from the US Department of Agriculture’s Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program to establish facilities that provide key community services. Any city, village, township or town, including recognized tribal lands, that meet this population threshold can apply.

The CURB community envisions a California that invests in community-based care and life-affirming safety, rather than a carceral system that is ineffective and harmful. In order to achieve this, California could adopt prison reuse as a strategic and generative part of its prison closure process.
Because most of us, we were first hurt by the same kinds of harm that we then perpetuated. It’s like the old saying, hurt people hurt people. Well, we can change that to hurt people help people, because we know what it took for us. I know what it took to put me in the position that I was in, I know what it takes to get me out of it, and what it takes to create an environment where it is preventable in the future.

- Jo’an Dunn, California Medical Facility
This Prison Closure Roadmap has offered guidance for the long-overdue reorientation of the California political economy away from its current dependence on prisons. The harm of the prison-oriented response to the management of unemployed and under-resourced communities has been egregious.

The first phase, Selecting Prisons for Closure prioritizes those prisons that rank highly on criteria specified by incarcerated persons themselves. These include: hazard-level of conditions from a health standpoint (i.e., water contamination and poison, asbestos, mold, etc.); severity of overcrowding; monetary cost of incarceration; location of prison and distance from loved ones (accounting for availability of travel means); and prevalence of homicides and suicides.

The second phase, Prison Population Reduction and Facility Closure Strategies takes a harm-reduction approach. Minimizing harm requires that: (1) releases are prioritized over transfers; (2) closures happen within one year after the prison is identified; (3) people being transferred have autonomy over their transfer location; (4) measures are taken to ensure continuity of safety, healthcare, and protection of personal property amidst transfers; and (5) impacts of facility closures and yard integrations are closely monitored.

The third phase, Decarceral Just Transition: Support for Impacted Communities, reemphasizes the needs of communities closing prisons, but also foregrounds the needs of communities from which the incarcerated population comes. Two sources of funding are proposed. The first, categorized as “Tier 1,” would be tied to the establishment of Redevelopment Grants for the repurposing of prison infrastructure and tax credits to businesses that create jobs for the community. “Tier 2” would consist of prioritizing towns closing prisons and communities from which the incarcerated population comes for existing economic investments developed under the Newsom administration such as climate action resources, Project Homekey and additional industry-based incentives.

The fourth phase, Prison Repurposing, emphasizes the importance of focusing on community needs and reimagining the role of previous prison infrastructure in meeting these needs. Essential elements are: (1) establishment of a committee/commission to oversee the process; (2) preparation of budget and user-friendly guiding documents; (3) educational activities that empower all participants as decision-makers; and (4) participation of community members in visioning and project design.
California must urgently adopt a concrete Prison Closure Roadmap.

According to the LAO’s analysis, CDCR could close eight prisons and still have 15,000 empty prison beds. The movement to Close California Prisons presents a historic opportunity to shift our priorities from punishment to community care and economic investment, resourcing those most affected by state violence and the towns where prisons close. It’s time for our state’s leaders to take bold action during the 2023-24 budget cycle and enact an ambitious plan that centers the well-being of all Californians. By capturing the billions in cost savings from closed prisons, we can build a brighter future for our communities and ensure a more just and equitable society.
2. Governor Newsom's 2022-2023 Enacted Budget Summary: Criminal Justice.
4. For more details on criteria methodology, please see Appendix A of CURB's People's Plan for Prison Closure.
6. Fig.1 shows prison infrastructure and capital outlay cost savings estimates for the ten state-owned prisons named in CURB's People's Plan for Prison Closure.
11. Statement by the LAO at a May 21, 2022 hearing of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Public Safety
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
28. Ibid.

WORKS CITED, ctd.

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