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Photography sample [here](#).

Links to other selected work samples can be found [here](#).

An article from The Peninsula Press follows, though readers are encouraged to see the full, online version [here](#), since the piece has integrated multimedia (fully produced by me).

Car-Free SF Roads' Opponents Say They Create Congestion. Reality's More Complicated.

By Evan Peng — November 4, 2022

In Tuesday's election, San Francisco voters will decide the fate of two car-free spaces which have become popular destinations for recreation.

Opponents contend that the closed roads have increased drive times and traffic on side streets. But proponents of the car bans say those claims just aren't backed up by the available evidence and research.

The two roads were originally closed to car traffic by the city early on in the pandemic as an emergency action to create space for safer, socially distanced recreation.

The first road is JFK Promenade in Golden Gate Park. JFK Drive, as it was formerly known, had already been closed to cars on Sundays and some Saturdays before the pandemic, but now it is always car-free. In April, the Board of Supervisors voted 7-4, with the backing of Mayor London Breed, to make the JFK car ban permanent.

The second is the Upper Great Highway on the city's Pacific coast. At first, Great Highway was also always closed to cars, but since August 2021, it has been open to cars on weekdays before closing at noon on Fridays and through the weekend.

In July, a proposal to revert the two roads back to their pre-pandemic statuses gathered enough signatures to qualify for the ballot, with the designation Proposition I. A competing measure, Proposition J, is also on the ballot, and would affirm the Board of Supervisors' April vote to make JFK Promenade permanent.

If both measures get more than 50% yes votes, the one with a greater number of votes would pass and leave the other one moot.

In the months since the measures got on the ballot, intense organizing on the issue has ensued, with each side passionately making their cases.

On one side are those in favor of Prop J and against Prop I, including Luke Bornheimer, an organizer with advocacy group Community Spaces SF, which is campaigning for Prop J.

"It provides people safe and accessible space to recreate, to build community, and to experience nature without the negative effects of cars," Bornheimer said.

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“This just makes it slightly easier, safer, and more convenient for people to enjoy our parks and get around our city in a sustainable, safe, and more environmentally friendly manner—and healthier, for that matter,” he added.

And in a city that averages between two and three pedestrians struck by vehicles each day, advocates highlight the safety they say banning cars provides. Before the pandemic and its subsequent closure, sections of JFK Drive were designated part of San Francisco's High Injury Network, or the 13% of streets responsible for 75% of severe or fatal traffic crashes.

“This is because it was primarily a cut-through street; a lot of traffic was moving through here, sometimes people going way too fast,” said Marta Lindsey, the communications director of Walk San Francisco, a non-profit campaigning for Prop J.

“This is a park. This was never the intention, for this to become a thoroughfare,” she added.

But on the opposing side, those against Prop J and in favor of Prop I—whose campaign is overwhelmingly funded by groups and individuals connected to the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park—say the road closures decrease access to Golden Gate Park and the beaches along Great Highway. They claim the ban on cars has made neighboring streets and neighborhoods more congested and less safe.

One section of the website of the Yes on I campaign (officially called Access For All) reads, “The closures have also pushed traffic into our neighborhoods, turning small local streets into high-traffic roads.”

“Prop I will move cars back to major roadways and off local streets that are not designed for high-volume traffic, reducing accidents and pollution and improving pedestrian and bicycle safety,” it adds.

Data, experts, and research, however, complicate the picture.

An analysis from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency found no significant change in vehicle travel times for several north-south and east-west trips around Golden Gate Park before and after the full-time vehicle restrictions on JFK. The study found that after the vehicle ban, although traffic volumes may have been higher at certain intersections during rush hour, overall traffic volumes were generally lower.

There were other factors that could have played a role across the two time periods like changes in travel patterns related to the pandemic -- but at the very least the study complicates Access For All's assertions.

Access For All did not respond to multiple requests for comment on this article, despite indication that the messages were received and seen. The group Open the Great Highway, which is cited as a sponsor in the full name of Access For All that is registered with the government, declined an interview request in an unsigned email.

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Research and history also suggest that increased traffic on neighboring streets is not inevitable after road closure, contrary to what many might expect.

Induced demand is an economic theory that says when more of something is provided, or it's provided at a lower price, people become more likely to use it. When applied to vehicle transportation, it's called induced traffic.

“We widen the highway, we speed up travel, people drive more,” said Susan Handy, director of the National Center for Sustainable Transportation at UC Davis. “They make more trips, they go to farther destinations, they may decide to live a little farther away from work; there are a lot of adjustments that happen that lead to an increase in driving.”

The opposite phenomenon, termed reduced demand, has not been studied as robustly, but there are real-life case studies, including in San Francisco.

In 1986, San Francisco voters rejected a plan to tear down the Embarcadero Freeway along San Francisco's northeastern waterfront. But after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake severely damaged the freeway, public sentiment changed, and the city replaced it with a boulevard.

The traffic nightmares that had been predicted did not materialize, and today, the Embarcadero is a bustling area with masses of pedestrians, many of them tourists.

“There's very good reason to believe that when you take away capacity, some of that driving will go away, and you're not going to end up with a whole lot of traffic problems simply because you've closed those roadways. People adjust,” Handy said.

That's not to say concerns aren't valid or that there might not be traffic increases in the short term, she added.

Some say the shift in travel patterns has already been occurring with the roads in question.

“We've seen people in cars gravitate towards and drive on Lower Great Highway as well as Sunset Boulevard. But we've also seen a number of people not use cars for trips that they used to use cars for, or take shorter trips closer to home,” Bornheimer, said.

In any case, it's not clear that the beliefs about higher traffic are even held by all who live in the neighborhoods surrounding the closed roads.

Running parallel to the Upper Great Highway is the Lower Great Highway, a largely residential street featuring speed bumps, stop signs, and a speed limit of 25 mph.

Take a drive there these days (there's one lane going each direction), and you'll pass by colorful houses whose windows variously feature campaign signs from both sides of the debate. In one camp, the signs say “Yes on J”, “Safe Parks For All”, and “Keep Upper Great Highway For The People”. In the other, they say “Yes on I”, “Open The Great Highway”, and “Access For All”.

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Photography sample [here](#).

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An article from Bloomberg CityLab follows (online version [here](#)).

They Pledged Not to Prosecute Abortions. The Reality Is Tougher

By Evan Peng — August 20, 2022

When the US Supreme Court toppled the constitutional right to abortion, some prosecutors in cities and counties across the country vowed to refrain from enforcing new state-imposed bans on the procedure. Such promises may be hard to keep.

Just ask [Andrew Warren](#), the twice-elected state attorney in Hillsborough County, Florida, a state where abortion is now illegal after 15 weeks of pregnancy. In June, after the Supreme Court ruling, Warren joined a group of prosecutors and some state attorneys general in a written pledge not to pursue criminal charges in abortion cases. By August, he was out of a job.

Governor Ron DeSantis ousted Warren and appointed a replacement, [saying](#) Warren had neglected his duty and that state attorneys can't pick and choose which laws they agree with. Warren [sued](#) DeSantis in federal court on Wednesday, claiming the governor violated his right of free speech and his "absolute" discretion to decide whether and how to prosecute crimes in the county, which includes Tampa.

"This should outrage everybody because it's an assault on democracy," Warren said. "I'm exercising my discretion in a way that the voters elected me to do. I was elected because they shared my vision for criminal justice, because they trusted my judgment."

The Florida dispute shows how the legal fight over abortion has shifted since the Supreme Court overturned its landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision and said states can regulate abortion. While states including California, New York and Illinois have declared they will protect access to the procedures, more than a dozen including Texas, Wisconsin and Louisiana [now have bans](#) either in place or temporarily on hold by judges, and more are expected, creating rifts among local officials.

According to 90 prosecutors from across the country, including Warren, who signed a joint statement in June, personal medical decisions shouldn't be criminalized. In explaining their pledge to not enforce bans, the prosecutors said they've long had wide latitude over charging decisions. Some used that power in recent years to focus more on violent crimes and less on things like undocumented immigrants or marijuana offenses.

"We decline to use our offices' resources to criminalize reproductive health decisions and commit to exercise our well-settled discretion and refrain from prosecuting those who seek, provide, or support abortions," the prosecutors said.

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But it isn't clear how effective such pledges can be in the more than two dozen states where abortions are prohibited, severely restricted or where bans are being litigated. Of those who signed the statement, only 16 local prosecutors were in jurisdictions with abortion clinics facing new bans.

In New Orleans, the City Council voted unanimously to deprioritize the investigation of abortion cases and the Orleans Parish district attorney promised not to prosecute them. But all three of the abortion clinics in Louisiana are moving out of state, including Women's Health Care Center in New Orleans, after the Louisiana Supreme Court allowed the state abortion ban to stand.

The City Council in Austin, Texas -- a state with a near-complete ban on abortions -- adopted a policy recommendation to deprioritize abortion-related cases and to restrict the use of city funds for such investigations. However, it's a non-binding measure because Texas law prohibits the city council from directing how its employees handle criminal cases.

Arrest Risk

Part of the reason abortion providers may not be convinced they'll avoid jail is that prosecutors aren't the only ones involved in bringing criminal charges.

"There are going to be police and sheriffs who might not be ideologically aligned with their prosecutor, and so abortion providers and even pregnant people and other people associated with the process could find themselves being harassed anyway, or arrested anyway or surveilled anyway," said [Somil Trivedi](#), a senior staff attorney for the Criminal Law Reform Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

Doctors also can lose their state medical license for performing an illegal abortion, and clinics can be closed by the state medical board. And there's the risk that the statute of limitations will exceed the term of an elected prosecutor, who can be voted out of office or even recalled and replaced with someone who seeks to pursue abortion cases.

In Michigan, the Supreme Court's decision on [Roe v. Wade](#) revived a [1931 abortion ban](#), though a [judge](#) on Friday left it on hold while Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, wages a [court fight](#) over whether it is valid under the state's Constitution. But prosecutors in the 13 counties with abortion clinics don't all agree on whether to enforce the law if it survives.

"I am not going to charge people under this statute," said Karen McDonald, prosecutor for Oakland County. "I won't spend our precious resources to do it."

In at least three of those 13 counties, prosecutors have said they'd enforce the ban. "I do not believe it is proper for me to simply ignore a law, any law, that was passed by the Michigan legislature and signed by the governor" in 1931, said Chris Becker in Kent County.

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Take Over Case

If a prosecutor refuses to bring charges in an abortion case, some states can have the attorney general step in using a rarely invoked process called supersession.

“It allows another government official to second guess or take over the case from a district attorney,” former Maine Attorney General James Tierney said in an interview.

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Ohio and Tennessee are among the states where the attorney general or governor has the power to supersede, though most don’t have the resources or staff to handle individual prosecutions, Tierney said.

States that don’t allow such intervention include Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas, but that could change. To make sure every abortion crime is prosecuted, one Republican lawmaker in Texas has [proposed](#) allowing a district attorney to prosecute residents outside their jurisdiction.

Prosecutors who don’t want to charge abortion crimes would be better off being more discreet, said Kermit Roosevelt III, a constitutional law professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. “I think it’s much less likely to succeed on a high profile issue that people care about and particularly if it’s announced publicly,” he said.

In Tennessee, Davidson County District Attorney Glenn Funk vowed not to enforce the state’s abortion ban, drawing the ire of Republican Governor Bill Lee.

“A district attorney purposefully disregarding current, duly enacted laws by the legislature is a grave matter that threatens our justice system and has serious consequences,” Lee said on Twitter. “The rule of law is the cornerstone of our legal system, and we all take an oath to uphold the law, not to pick and choose what laws to follow based on politics or personal feelings.”

Still, abortion advocates said they welcome any pledge by prosecutors not to bring charges.

“No matter what, it’s important for every elected official at every level of government right now to make clear that they stand with the vast majority of people in this country who believe in reproductive freedom,” said Andrea Miller, president of the National Institute for Reproductive Health.

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Photography sample [here](#).

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An article from Bloomberg News follows (online version [here](#)).

‘He Was Helping Us’: Investors Cheer CEO Accused of Scamming Them

By Evan Peng — August 10, 2022

For Louisiana Francois, who sank \$10,000 into what prosecutors say was a Ponzi-like crypto scheme, driving four hours from her home outside Boston to watch the man who allegedly took her money appear in court was an easy call.

But she didn’t go to condemn him. She went to cheer him on.

“I’m standing with Eddy Alexandre, because he was helping us,” Francois said. “As a nurse, I used to have two jobs. Because of EminiFX, I have only one job right now.”

EminiFX was the platform Alexandre marketed as a crypto and foreign currency exchange based on a unique proprietary technology. Federal authorities say that technology was smoke and mirrors and that Alexandre scammed hundreds of clients out of at least \$59 million, luring them with “promises of huge passive income returns.”

They allege he actually invested just a few million dollars of the funds, adding rewards to his clients’ balances for recruiting others to the platform and using the growing influx of cash to keep his first victims happy with handsome “returns.” He promised weekly gains of at least 5% and to make them millionaires as the platform traded for them through its “Robo-Advisor Assisted account,” the US says.

A preliminary report by the court-appointed receiver in a parallel, civil suit brought by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission reckoned the damage at more than 62,000 EminiFX clients bilked of as much as \$250 million.

Along the way, the government alleges, Alexandre dipped into the giant trough to treat himself to a new BMW and other luxuries.

Alexandre was arrested in May and charged with commodities fraud and wire fraud. He has pleaded not guilty.

Hunting for Returns

The allegations come at a volatile time in financial markets, with cryptocurrencies and other alternative assets experiencing sharp declines and investors hunting for returns. Alexandre is accused of denying his clients even the chance of an upturn. Ponzi schemes, in which funds from later investors are used to pay earlier ones, can go undetected for years before imploding.

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The Ponzi-like fraud the government alleges lasted only about nine months, during which Francois said she was able to make withdrawals.

To her and hundreds of other Alexandre investors who gathered for the status conference at federal court in Manhattan last Wednesday, the bad guys are the government and the receiver, whom they see as depriving them of their funds. Some were dressed for court themselves, in suits and dresses, while others proudly wore T-shirts or sported buttons proclaiming, “We support our CEO.”

“After his arrest, everybody is struggling,” said Ricardo, an EminiFX investor from Pennsylvania who declined to give his last name. He said some clients had run into financial problems, including unpaid medical bills, because they couldn’t get at their money.

“You said you’re going to protect me?” Ricardo said of the government and the receiver. “I don’t believe that.”

Guaranteed 5% — a Week

EminiFX solicited funds from investors starting in September, according to prosecutors and the CFTC. Then, every Friday, investors’ accounts would show a weekly return of 5% to 9.99%, plus the bump for recruiters.

The vast majority of their funds was never invested, according to the government, which cites actual investments of only \$9 million, mainly in individual equities and single-equity options, and those investments led to losses of \$6 million. Meanwhile, the US alleges, Alexandre transferred about \$15 million to his personal bank account, some of which he used to buy the BMW.

Alexandre, described in a [May 12 statement](#) by prosecutors as a 50-year-old living in Valley Stream, New York, hosted Zoom webinars every Thursday to update clients, according to the [criminal complaint](#). In at least one of those meetings, the US says, he told investors they could quickly become millionaires — as long as they didn’t make any withdrawals.

Alexandre’s lawyers declined to comment on the case, as did prosecutors and the CFTC. [David Castleman](#), the receiver, pointed to a [website](#) available to investors that explains the process of recovering funds.

‘Not Going to Wash Dishes’

Supporters of Alexandre had traveled from abroad as well, including Canada, France and Haiti, having organized themselves on the messaging app Telegram after the arrest, Francois said. Many cited the weekly statements and the ability to withdraw gains as proof that EminiFX was legitimate, and consider Alexandre a driving force for positive change in their lives.

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In the conference, at which a trial date was set for March 27, they were mostly silent. Alexandre, who had been released on a \$3 million bond and home detention, gave short answers to basic questions from the court.

Jean Guillaume, an EminiFX investor and Haitian-American who drove to court from Philadelphia, said the case against Alexandre, a Black man, was racist. He offered hypothetical examples of people of color enriched by EminiFX and quitting jobs he said corporate America needs to fill with cheap labor.

“These two people are not going to wash dishes” anymore, Guillaume said. “These two people are not going to be in the nursing home, because they’re gonna have money. And then, when they’re losing that workforce, it’s a threat to them.”

‘Receivership = Deceivership’

After court, supporters gathered outside hoping to catch a glimpse of Alexandre as he left. Chants broke out, some led by people with megaphones.

“We don’t need your receivership!” they called out. One handwritten sign read, “Receivership = Deceivership.”

Many were unimpressed with the hearing, accusing the prosecution of delaying because, they said, it had no evidence against Alexandre. Some said they would convene at the courthouse every step of the way, however minor or momentous the occasion.

“I don’t care if the case takes six months, a year, two, three, 10 years,” Francois said. “I will stay and wait for Eddy Alexandre, because he was not doing a scam. He was helping us.”

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An article from The Stanford Daily follows (online version [here](#)).

Stanford lab builds a water-resilient future, gallons of sewage at a time

By Evan Peng — September 22, 2021

As the American West faces unprecedented drought, one promising solution is the expansion of water recycling programs and technology. Stanford's William and Cloy Codiga Resource Recovery Center (CR2C) has been buoyed by the demand for solutions, and continues to expand as it carries out its mission of researching water and energy resource recovery and recycling.

In recent years, water systems in the American West have come under more and more strain, culminating in today's severe drought. Water resources are scarce in the West, and yet the population [continues to grow](#), leading to an urgent search for sustainable solutions.

"The fact that we are back in a drought a couple of years after we were in a severe drought — it is problematic, and it's a real issue," Newsha Ajami, director of Urban Water Policy at Stanford's Water in the West program, said. "It is a really problematic issue, especially because we are experiencing drier and hotter droughts than we used to."

But because of the history of drought, most jurisdictions in California have addressed "the lowest hanging fruit" in terms of water conservation, CR2C Executive Director Sebastien Tilmans M.S. '10 Ph.D. '15 said. So the solution is not simply cutting more water use, as much of the current water demand is fairly rigid; instead, water recycling, Tilmans said, is critical for a sustainable water system in the long-run.

But funding and regulations are lagging. Many current water recycling systems in California, including many which were built around the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, are nearing or exceeding the end of their life cycles. More importantly, they use technology that [consumes a significant amount of electricity](#) to run. And this shortcoming is where CR2C's research initiatives come in.

CR2C is an active research facility on Stanford's campus, tucked away behind a police station and a bank. It consists of an unassuming collection of walkways, colored pipes, tanks and meters all shielded from the elements by a metal canopy. The tanks and pipes allow for active experimentation on real wastewater that is siphoned from Stanford's wastewater output.

Any resulting material from the experiments is then inserted back into Stanford's regular wastewater stream, which flows to Palo Alto's wastewater treatment plant to be treated as normal sewage. Although everything CR2C currently produces in its tanks is strictly for

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research purposes, the eventual goal would be for wastewater treated using the processes CR2C is testing to be reused in actual water systems.

The research conducted at CR2C varies, but the shining star of the program is a project testing new anaerobic biological wastewater treatment methods. Currently, such biological treatment is commonly aerobic, done using types of bacteria that require oxygen to be pumped in constantly. This process uses a massive amount of energy and produces undesirable byproducts, including carbon dioxide.

Anaerobic treatment, which does not require oxygen, is typically viewed as being too slow for commercial, large-scale use. But the anaerobic system CR2C is testing, called the Staged Anaerobic Fluidized Membrane Bioreactor (SAF-MBR), not only requires no oxygen pumping, but it even produces methane, which can then be used to produce energy.

According to Tilmans, in contrast to today's common electricity-guzzling treatment plants, the modeled energy output from burning the produced methane in a SAF-MBR facility is greater than the energy that is needed to run the system at full scale.

“You could see a future in which these treatment plants could be converted into green power plants,” Tilmans said. “So not only are you producing clean water, but you're also producing renewable energy.”

As an extension of the SAF-MBR testing, CR2C recently partnered with Silicon Valley Clean Water, a wastewater treatment group in the Bay Area, to build a secondary test treatment site in Redwood City. This second site is essentially a larger version of the one on Stanford's campus, built to run further experiments at a larger scale.

That Redwood City system came online earlier this year, and the SAF-MBR has had promising results. Running at full capacity since last month, resulting water quality has hit target level.

Right now, the wastewater is recovered only to a point where it is safe to release into the environment. The next phase in research is to test technologies that CR2C hopes will be able to bring the wastewater all the way to drinking-quality.

The current drought in the West is uniquely accelerating the urgency of the type of work CR2C is doing. Though drought is a common occurrence in the region, this time around traditional water reserves such as snowpack, groundwater basins and reservoirs did not have a chance to recover between droughts as they normally do, according to Ajami of the Water in the West program.

“Because we were in a drought, got out and then a couple years later we're back in it again, our system hasn't recovered fully,” Ajami said. “It's definitely testing the resiliency of our environment, our system as a whole.”

Testing that resiliency is where wastewater recovery comes in, and CR2C is hoping to show its potential. “We're trying to sort of transform people's perspectives on wastewater away from it

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being a hazardous waste that needs to be mitigated toward thinking of it as an ore that needs to be purified,” Tilmans said.

“I view water recycling as critical to our strategy in California, and I think it’s not a question of if we’re going to recycle the water, but when and how,” he added.

The University, too, is not immune to the drought, and is thinking critically about these questions of water conservation and management — especially as the University has plans to expand. Water use has decreased from 2.5 million gallons per day in 2000 to 1.5 million gallons per day now.

But like Tilmans said of municipalities across California, “the ‘easy’ savings have been achieved,” as Tom Zigterman, the senior director of Water Resources and Civil Infrastructure at Stanford, wrote in an email. “But we can do even more,” he added, listing plans ranging from stormwater capture to using non-potable lake water for irrigation as paths the University is pursuing to further mitigate drought conditions.

Tilmans and CR2C hope they can make it onto that list; there have been discussions with the University about a partnership to construct a full-scale water recycling facility on campus. But so far, the University has not made any commitments.

Tilmans is hopeful that Stanford will make the leap eventually.

“In today’s world, it’s kind of necessary — it’s the prudent thing to do,” he said of implementing robust water recycling programs. “We think that this is without question the right way to go, and would basically allow Stanford to continue to lead on questions of sustainability by demonstrating a path forward.”