

On Lessons Not Learned: Blue Cities Like Seattle Confirm the Broken Windows Theory—40 Years After It Was Proposed

Gillian Richards

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Current leaders theoretically could muster the political will to repair enough “broken windows” and bring Seattle back from the brink.

However, that would require immense moral and political courage, and it seems more likely that Seattle will not return to its original prosperity.

Cities that want to avoid the Emerald City’s fate might want to repair windows as soon as they are broken.

Empowering a Criminal

Aspiring musician Travis Berge moved to Seattle in 2014. Over the next four years, he racked up a hefty criminal record with over 35 criminal convictions and violations.¹ His documented offenses included disturbance, assault, trespass, and attempted rape.

Berge made it into a report on 100 of Seattle’s most prolific offenders.²

“You’re on a list, you know,” Seattle reporter Eric Johnson told Berge in an interview for a 2019 documentary, *Seattle Is Dying*.³

“Nice,” Berge answered with an impish grin. “Which one am I?” he asked, jumping up and down.

“Which number on the list? Oh, you’re up there,” Johnson responded.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/bg3826>

The Heritage Foundation | 214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE | Washington, DC 20002 | (202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

When asked about his methamphetamine usage, Berge said, “I try to use it at least once a day, but I don’t really consider myself a drug abuser.”

“Do you steal for your habit?” Johnson asked.

“I actually just started stealing last Monday,” Berge claimed. “I’m having a blast now,” he added, implying that he plans to continue stealing. “It is so much fun.”

Johnson asked Berge the common-sense question that would be on the mind of every viewer: What should Seattle’s criminal justice system do with a guy like him?

“I think that this system has done what any viable...legitimate system would. And they’ve really, like, exalted me and shown deference and love towards me,” Berge confessed. “I don’t feel like I’ll ever be arrested again,” he added. “I haven’t been in jail for like a year and three months or so.... [T]hat definitely shows that I have conquered the criminal justice system.”

A little over a year after Berge was featured in the documentary, he killed his girlfriend, Lisa Vach, while living in a tent near Seattle’s Cal Anderson Park. Investigators at the scene of the crime found Vach beaten to death in a tent near the park in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood. Berge later died in a tank filled with bleach and water while trying to escape the police.⁴

Berge believed he had conquered the criminal justice system—and in a sense, he was right. He never had to break his addiction or quit stealing. He was never truly held accountable for his actions. Instead of providing the proper punishment, drug treatment, or both, Seattle enabled his addiction and criminality.

What Went Wrong?

There are countless stories like Travis Berge’s in Seattle. The fact that such prolific offenders are repeatedly let off the hook and allowed to indulge their addictions is an obvious sign that the rule of law and any semblance of public order are decaying.

This societal breakdown in the Emerald City, once a thriving business hub, has been underway for the past decade. To understand this decline, we should first consider the specific policies and approaches that have contributed to this decay.

- Seattle has taken a decidedly soft approach on crime.
- It has loosened its drug laws and has discouraged law enforcement officials from enforcing existing laws with respect to public drug use and possession.

- It has enabled homelessness by taking a “Housing First” approach to the crisis while overlooking the other serious causes of homelessness—untreated mental illness and substance abuse.

Second, we should explore the broader philosophical and sociological assumptions at play. The city’s progressive leaders have been blinded by an ideology that eschews basic facts about human nature and the foundational sources of an orderly, peaceful society. They have focused on “free handouts” that ignore trade-offs and incentives rather than on the vital institutions that uphold society: families, churches, schools, civic organizations, businesses, and a functioning legal system.

Seattle is an example of a broader trend among progressive cities around the country. The Emerald City may be beyond repair, but it is worth analyzing how this happens—if only to prevent it from happening to other cities that are not so far gone.

Broken Windows

George Kelling and James Q. Wilson wrote of this problem in their classic 1982 article, “Broken Windows.” “[A]t the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked,” they wrote. “Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken.”⁵

Broken windows signal a breakdown of communal barriers, of “the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility.” Kelling and Wilson argued that vandalism can occur in any city once these communal barriers are “lowered by actions that seem to signal that ‘no one cares.’”

“Untended” behavior also erodes community controls. Take a neighborhood with an abandoned piece of property. Litter piles up, windows are broken, fights break out over the pettiest of offenses. “Many residents will think that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise, and they will modify their behavior accordingly.” Residents are less likely to go outside, and this in turn erodes the organic bonds of community. The neighborhood descends into a state of disorder, making it more vulnerable to criminal invasion. It is “more likely that here,” Kelling and Wilson argued, “rather than in places where people are confident they can regulate public behavior by informal controls, drugs will change hands, prostitutes will solicit, and cars will be stripped.”

Forty-two years after their famous essay on broken windows, we see a similar process of urban decay underway in Seattle. Walking downtown

through Pioneer Square or Westlake Plaza will give you the sense that “no one really cares.” Bad policies have contributed to this culture of lawlessness, and the Broken Windows theory—despite decades of scholarly debate about its application—is still being confirmed by the spirals of decay in our bluest cities, including Seattle, with the persistence of homeless encampments and open-air drug use.

Moreover, Broken Windows proved to be a successful strategy in the fight to restore law and order in New York City in the 1990s.⁶ Rather than heeding such lessons, however, Seattle mayors and city prosecutors decided to veer far left about a decade ago.⁷ Is it really a coincidence that once city leaders adopted new progressive approaches to law enforcement, crime and vagrancy skyrocketed?

Seattle’s Urban Decay

Seattle now ranks among the worst major American cities in terms of homeless encampments and open drug use.⁸ It has become comparable to San Francisco’s Tenderloin district and Los Angeles’ Skid Row. If you walk downtown or in any of the city’s surrounding districts, homeless encampments sprawl on the sidewalks and under highways and bridges. Trash, human waste, and needles litter the sidewalks. As the city’s policies on crime, loitering, and open drug use have become more lenient, violent crime, deaths from drug overdoses, and the rate of homelessness have skyrocketed.

Over the past decade, Seattle has become a haven for criminals, drug addicts, and loiterers. Like Travis Berge, these people come to Seattle because it has become known for its lax drug and crime policies, a phenomenon known as the “magnet effect.”⁹ According to a 2019 Point-in-Time count, 45 percent of the local homeless population came from outside the King County area, which includes Seattle and surrounding cities like Bellevue and Redmond.¹⁰

From 2015 to 2022, the region’s homeless population grew by 32 percent.¹¹ In Seattle alone, homelessness increased by 17 percent during this period.¹² According to U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) statistics, homelessness in Washington State grew by about 11 percent from 2022 to 2023. A majority of this population, as previously found, is concentrated in the Seattle region. From 2020 to 2022, the homeless population in Washington State grew by 10 percent, and more than 70 percent of that growth was in Seattle and King County.¹³

The Seattle area has also seen a dramatic increase in deaths from drug overdoses in the past few years. There were a record-breaking 1,200 drug

overdose deaths in 2023 according to Seattle–King County statistics.¹⁴ This number has tripled over the past four years. The vast majority of these deaths were associated with fentanyl. In Seattle alone, there was a 72 percent increase in drug overdose deaths from 2021 to 2022, and most of these deaths involved fentanyl or methamphetamine.¹⁵

The homeless were vastly overrepresented in this depressing statistic. Between January 1, 2023, and May 17, 2023, 20 percent of King County’s 530 overdose deaths were among the homeless—a rate that was on track to break all previous drug overdose records among the county’s homeless population.¹⁶

Crime has skyrocketed as well. In 2022, the rate of violent crime (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) in Seattle reached a 15-year high.¹⁷ And Seattle surpassed a 30-year homicide record in 2023. By the end of November, Seattle had already reached a total of 71 homicides, two more than the city’s previous record of 69 murders in all of 1994.¹⁸ At the same time, the city’s police staffing has reached record lows. From 2020 to 2022, the Seattle Police Department lost over 400 officers.¹⁹

Meanwhile, businesses are fleeing the city. In 2021, the Downtown Seattle Association estimated that 500 street-level businesses had closed since 2019.²⁰

Seattle Wasn’t Always Like This

I was born in 1999 at the University of Washington Hospital in Seattle at the height of the tech boom. The turn of the millennium was the cap on a decade in which the Seattle metropolitan area began to buzz with wealth and energy, infused by industry leaders such as stalwart Microsoft and a newcomer called Amazon—which at the time was still headquartered in an old hospital atop Seattle’s Beacon Hill.

Between 1990 and 1998, King County underwent an economic boom that created nearly 175,000 new jobs and a population growth of 158,500.²¹ Nearly 75 percent of the county’s high-tech growth between 1995 and 1998 was in Seattle and Eastside cities.²² By 1999, over 24,000 Washingtonians were employed in the software industry, nearly all of them in King County.²³

The rapid growth in the Seattle metropolitan region’s knowledge and high-tech sectors attracted innovation and talent. By the late 1990s, about two million people lived in the Seattle metropolitan area.²⁴ This period of economic growth brought prosperity and a bustling, optimistic culture characterized as the “Seattle Spirit” to the city.

The late Seattle lawyer and businessman Tom Alberg described the city’s economic growth in this period as a “flywheel.” “As more people move to

Seattle, more innovations give rise to new companies, which attract more creative people, and the flywheel accelerates,” Alberg wrote in 2021, looking back on the 1990s boom.²⁵ But how did this flywheel get going in the first place? As Alberg sees it, Seattle has had two economic flywheels. One generated its early economic growth with the foundation of Boeing in 1916, and one generated its later explosion. “What the two have in common,” in his view, “is a beautiful setting with plenty of opportunities that attract pioneering, entrepreneurial types, and keep them there.”

At the same time the economy was booming, crime in Seattle was dropping. Property crime declined steadily throughout the 1990s.²⁶ Violent crime, which was high at the beginning of the decade, fell dramatically in the mid-1990s and remained low well into the 2000s.²⁷ The murder rate dropped by 32 percent from 1994 to 1995 and 25 percent from 1995 to 1996.²⁸ The University of Washington, located in Seattle’s University District, was considered one of the safest urban campuses in the nation. My family lived safely less than a mile from campus until 2013.

This spirit of innovation, however, has been quashed in recent years by progressive city officials who have demonized businesses and allowed lawlessness to flourish—all in the name of “equity” and “social justice.”

Seattle has been liberal for decades, but not too long ago, it was governed by officials who had some common sense about enforcing the law and maintaining civil society. Over the past decade, however, the Seattle City Council and prosecutors have gone from liberal to radically leftist. The difference is glaring.

One such member of the City Council, who served for the past decade, was Kshama Sawant of the Socialist Alternative party.²⁹ I remember when Sawant was first running for election back in 2013. Pink posters with her face on them littered our neighborhood of Montlake, which was part of the district she would come to represent. We had moved to the East Coast by the time Sawant took office, narrowly escaping her reign of terror.

Punishing Business

In 2014, with Sawant’s support, Seattle became the first major city to approve a \$15 minimum wage.³⁰ In 2017, by a vote of 9 to 0, the Seattle City Council passed the infamous “head tax” on the city’s largest businesses (imposing a \$275 annual tax on all Amazon employees, for instance). Then-Council President Bruce Harrell, now Seattle’s mayor, backed the bill at the time, saying it would help to address the homelessness crisis.³¹ The tax was originally supposed to generate \$75 million per year, about

three-quarters of which would be spent on building “deeply affordable” housing units over the next five years.

The justifiable backlash from businesses and ordinary voters was so strong that the City Council repealed the head tax shortly after it was passed. Sawant and Councilwoman Teresa Mosqueda bemoaned the repeal.³²

City Council progressives have managed to pass other punitive measures that affect Seattle’s businesses. The JumpStart Seattle tax, passed in 2020, targets Amazon and other big companies in the region. The tax is meant to fund progressive pet projects such as affordable housing, climate change efforts, and the City Council’s equitable development initiative.³³ The city is now struggling to raise revenue from the payroll tax because—to no one’s surprise—the tech industry in Seattle is languishing.³⁴

In addition to directly punishing big companies, which employ thousands of Seattle and King County residents, Seattle has punished businesses indirectly by allowing crime and drug addiction to flourish on its streets. As a result, businesses that were once key sources of the city’s prosperity have fled. Over the past couple of years, for instance, Amazon has been moving employees out of its buildings in downtown Seattle to other locations such as the neighboring (and still functional) city of Bellevue.³⁵ In 2022, Amazon pulled its workers from one location on 300 Pine Street in Seattle, citing crime concerns.³⁶ In 2023, the company terminated the lease of another office near its South Lake Union campus³⁷ and announced that 2,000 employees would be moving from various Seattle offices to Bellevue.³⁸ In November 2023, Amazon founder and former CEO Jeff Bezos announced that he was moving from the Seattle area to Miami.³⁹

The customs brokerage firm TR International went farther and moved its headquarters away from the city. The firm’s CEO cited violence and rampant homelessness and drug use as the reasons. “Downtown started off as a vibrant place to be. Over time we became embarrassed,” she told King 5 News.⁴⁰ In September 2023, Target announced that it was closing two of its Seattle locations, citing theft and organized retail crime among its reasons.⁴¹

Though not all businesses that have closed in Seattle have cited crime as the reason for having done so, a 2022 Seattle City Auditor report revealed the nature of the crisis. That year, Seattle police received over 13,000 calls from the top 100 retail locations downtown. These calls cost police more than 18,000 hours annually, which is about equal to the annual work of nine full-time officers.⁴²

Seattle has become hostile to business and the prosperity it brings, and as businesses continue to flee the city, drug addicts and criminals flock there.

Crime

In 2019, Seattle attorney and former public safety consultant Scott Lindsay issued a report on 100 prolific offenders who cycled in and out of Seattle’s criminal justice system. The group was meant to be a representative sample of the larger population of frequent offenders in Seattle’s busiest neighborhoods. Lindsay found that “the individuals sampled in this report [had] cycled through the criminal justice system with little accountability and no apparent impact on their behavior.”⁴³

In a follow-up report, Lindsay found that the Seattle City Attorney’s Office (under then-City Attorney Pete Holmes) declined to file nearly half of all misdemeanor non-traffic cases that Seattle police referred each year. Moreover, prosecutors would take an average of six months to file cases in which the defendant was not in custody. According to the report, the rate at which cases were declined skyrocketed over 10 years: Just 17 percent of cases were declined in 2007, and 46 percent were declined by 2017.⁴⁴

The key commonalities among prolific offenders were substance use disorders, mental health conditions, and homelessness. “Of the 100 individuals examined based on significant recent criminal activity,” Lindsay reported, “all 100 of them had indicators that they struggle with substance use disorders.”⁴⁵

About 40 percent of the sampled repeat offenders showed clear signs of mental health disorders. Some 20 percent of the sample had histories of unprovoked assaults on innocent victims. Many in this group had previously been declared not competent to stand trial. Therefore, new cases referred against them were dismissed, and those offenders were released after a brief period of incarceration.

As Lindsay’s reports suggest, crime in Seattle is linked to drug use and homelessness. The city has been reluctant to crack down on crimes that are classified as “homelessness-related offenses,” which include theft, property destruction, and drug crimes.⁴⁶ These are not victimless crimes.

“The increase in street disorder is largely a function of the fact that heroin, crack, and meth possession has been largely legalized in the city over the past several years,” Lindsay told former Seattle Mayor Ed Murray in 2015. “The unintended consequence of that social policy effort has been to make Seattle a much more attractive place to buy and sell hard-core drugs. With drugs and drug addiction,” just as Kelling and Wilson predicted, “comes property crimes and street disorder.”⁴⁷

The situation grew worse in the wake of the George Floyd riots in the summer of 2020. The Seattle City Council supported the radical “defund

the police” movement, pushed by progressive activist organizations such as Decriminalize Seattle and King County Equity Now. Seven of the City Council’s nine members voted to slash the Seattle Police Department budget by 50 percent.⁴⁸

Even though a majority of the City Council backed draconian cuts in the police budget, however, members “quickly discovered...that a 50 percent cut was not possible,” Council member Lisa Herbold recounted.⁴⁹ Ultimately, the City Council cut 20 percent of the police budget in 2020, including cuts in overtime and salaries.⁵⁰ Given the rising crime rates, this was still a radical and irresponsible cut.

In 2022, the City Council passed a budget proposal that eliminated 80 vacant Seattle police officer positions. Budget Chair Teresa Mosqueda issued a statement saying that “[d]espite a grim budget forecast, the Chair stayed true to our values and invested in public safety with a racial equity and justice lens—despite the rhetoric [that] this budget decreases community safety investments.”⁵¹ Others, however, believed these cuts did not bode well for the future of the Seattle Police Department.

“Since 2020, SPD has lost over 400 officers and is now down to about 30% of its deployable force,” said Sara Nelson, a more moderate City Council member, who voted against the measure. “We won’t be able to hire enough officers if we continue down this road,” Nelson told a local talk show host.⁵² By May 2022, the number of trained and deployable officers in Seattle was the lowest it had been in over 30 years.⁵³ As we have seen in other cities across the country, cuts in police budgets and hostility from anti-police activists have hurt recruiting, retention, and morale of police forces.

The dramatic shortage of police officers in the last couple years was followed by more crime in the city. According to Jim Fuda of Crime Stoppers Puget Sound, criminals and drug addicts know that Seattle’s police force is short hundreds of officers. Crime has “become attractive.... [T]hat’s why it’s grown,” said Fuda.⁵⁴ The city may crack down on violent crime, but aside from this, drug-related crimes are largely unchecked.

“Seattle is in a crisis of its own making, with soaring crime in parts of the city enabled by lax enforcement and prosecution,” wrote the *Seattle Times* editorial board in a surprisingly frank 2019 article on the city’s persistent crime problem. “Drug addiction is a root cause but political dysfunction is exacerbating the problem by allowing prolific offenders to repeatedly steal, threaten and attack people with little consequence,” the writers added. “This is causing substantial harm, not only to individuals but [to] the city’s appeal as a place to raise families, create jobs and provide opportunity.”⁵⁵

A Broken Windows theorist would predict that small crimes like petty theft and loitering, when not enforced, beget public disorder and larger crimes. Although current Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison has prioritized cracking down on crime far more than her predecessor Pete Holmes, it's unclear how much she can curb the rampant drug addiction, disorderliness, and spirit of lawlessness that have pervaded the city. Under the law, the Seattle City Attorney can only prosecute misdemeanors in the City of Seattle. The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, headed by liberal Leesa Manion, is responsible for prosecuting all felony state crimes.

Seattle's current mayor, Bruce Harrell, also announced his plans to crack down on crime upon taking office in 2022.⁵⁶ He admitted that he "inherited a mess," but again, it is not clear that he can make a difference. For instance, Harrell tried to direct law enforcement to areas with high criminal activity, but recent reports indicate that crime and drug dens are still flourishing in those parts of town.

Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz even admitted that despite their efforts to curb crime, Mayor Harrell and City Attorney Davison will need "outside help" to address the problem effectively. "Many challenges facing our city cannot be solved by one department," Diaz said. "SPD cannot arrest its way out of rising crime, homelessness, mental health and economic equality."⁵⁷ In other words, even Chief Diaz is admitting that the crime problem has become so bad that it is beyond the control of law enforcement. "When we allow for the chronic violation of laws and social norms," as Michael Sheltenberger has observed in his book *San Fransicko*, "we erode the foundation of our cities and civilization."⁵⁸

Drugs

In 2021, the Washington Supreme Court struck down the state's law that classified drug possession as a felony. This ruling, known as the *Blake* decision,⁵⁹ "effectively invalidated half a century of criminal convictions, along with related aspects, like required restitution for crimes related to those causes," writes one Cascade PBS journalist.⁶⁰ Washington Governor Jay Inslee, a Democrat, then signed a temporary bill that classified drug possession as a misdemeanor, but only upon the third violation.⁶¹ The temporary bill was set to sunset after two years, at which point, if state lawmakers did not pass a permanent measure, Washington would have become the second state after Oregon to decriminalize the possession of hard drugs.⁶²

Thankfully, Washington did not follow in Oregon's footsteps. In May 2023, the Washington legislature passed a bill raising drug possession and

public use from a misdemeanor to a gross misdemeanor—but not a felony. A few months later, the Seattle City Council passed a law to align the city’s municipal code with the new state law, giving the City Attorney’s Office authority to prosecute drug crimes.⁶³ However, despite these changes, law enforcement is largely discouraged from enforcing this law: Whether an officer is to make an arrest is based on whether an offender seems to pose a “threat of harm to others.”⁶⁴

Jonathan Choe, a Seattle-based journalist for the Discovery Institute’s Fix Homelessness project, reported in 2023 that the city’s new drug law does not seem to have curbed drug-related crimes. “Just hours after a shooting near 12th Ave[.] & Jackson St. Tues. evening, the open-air drug den and black market of stolen goods only had around 60 people,” according to Choe, adding that “I want to say the city’s new drug bill is working, but we’re just in the ‘educational’ phase. No one is really being arrested for smoking fentanyl. They’re just being told to move along.”⁶⁵

Choe also reported last year that Seattle residents should assume that drug dealers are taking advantage of homeless encampments, called “trap tents,” that are scattered throughout the city: “This open-air drug market is being brazenly operated on Washington State Department of Transportation property and is just a block away from the notorious camp that blew up last month after a DRUG FUELED TURF WAR gone bad.”⁶⁶

Choe wrote in 2022 that “[a]long 3rd Avenue, against the backdrop of Pike Place Market in Seattle’s downtown core, the addicts smoke and inject all kinds of substances in plain sight.” He noted that the “current drug of choice is fentanyl.” One man showed Choe how he inhales fentanyl with a hollowed-out pen. Fentanyl, often sold as “blues” pills, was sold three pills for \$10 at the time of Choe’s writing, but “tomorrow it could be even cheaper. The drug dealers prey on these lost souls.”⁶⁷

Homelessness

Seattle’s unchecked drug crisis is intimately related to its homelessness crisis. One homeless woman interviewed in the *Seattle Is Dying* documentary said that everyone she encountered living on the streets was experiencing some level of drug addiction. Although this is anecdotal, any observer will see that it is likely true—and has been for years. As Manhattan Institute Senior Fellow Christopher Rufo has written, “The reality, obvious to anyone who spends any time in tent cities or emergency shelters, is that 80 percent of the homeless suffer from drug and alcohol addiction and 30 percent suffer from serious mental illness, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.”⁶⁸

A survey conducted by the City of Seattle in 2016 found that over half of the homeless surveyed admitted to using drugs or alcohol. And those are just self-reports. The actual number is likely much higher.⁶⁹

In 2019, the California Policy Lab analyzed 64,000 surveys of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals across 15 states.⁷⁰ Researchers found that mental health and substance abuse issues were among the main reasons that unsheltered individuals cited for being homeless. Moreover, the conditions related to health and substance abuse were present among the unsheltered homeless even before they lost housing. Compared with those in shelters, the unsheltered were “nearly three times as likely to report mental health conditions had contributed to loss of housing (50% to 17%), and *more than eight times* as likely to report that use of drugs or alcohol had contributed to loss of housing (51% vs. 6%).”⁷¹

In 2019, psychologist Kenneth Rosenberg estimated that at least one-quarter of the U.S. homeless population suffered from serious mental illness and that, among this group, as many as two-thirds also had a substance use disorder or other health condition.⁷² Others have made even higher estimates. In their book *A Nation in Denial*, for example, Alice Baum and Donald Burnes note that “emerging research” has “documented that up to 85 percent of all homeless adults suffer from chronic alcoholism, drug addiction, or some combination of the three.”⁷³

Housing First

Progressive activists often insist that homelessness is the result of a lack of affordable housing. While high housing costs may exacerbate the problem, viewing homelessness as only a housing problem overlooks the deeper challenges facing those who languish on the streets.

Government “Housing First” policies seek to solve homelessness by making housing their main (if not their sole) focus, but Housing First policies have failed.⁷⁴ The City of Seattle and King County have spent hundreds of millions (if not billions) of dollars on housing units for the homeless.⁷⁵ Such projects have been underway for the better part of a decade, and it has been estimated that Seattle has spent nearly \$1 billion on homelessness over this period,⁷⁶ yet homelessness continues to rise.

The same is true in California, another state that has focused heavily on Housing First. California increased the number of permanent housing units for the homeless by 25,000 between 2010 and 2019. During that same period, the number of people who were living on the streets rose by 50 percent.⁷⁷

In 2022, the Discovery Institute's Fix Homelessness project reported that:

Seattle ranks third in the nation for its homelessness population, surpassed only by Los Angeles and New York City.... All this despite millions of dollars in increased expenditures in attempts to address the growing crisis. In 2017, The Seattle Times reported that King County was pouring over \$195 million into the homelessness problem (Seattle's portion was more than \$60 million).⁷⁸

Why, then, has Seattle's response to homelessness largely failed? It has failed primarily because homelessness advocates and city officials rely on faulty assumptions about the nature of the problem. Take, for instance, former Socialist Alternative City Councilwoman Kshama Sawant, who said that "the explosion of the homelessness crisis is a symptom of how deeply dysfunctional capitalism is and also how much worse living standards have gotten with the last several decades of the pushback against labor unions and against organizing and the decimation of mass movements."⁷⁹

King County's official response to homelessness similarly relies on the assumption that homelessness is a result of unaffordable housing and racial inequity. The King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), which largely oversees homelessness outreach efforts in King County and Seattle, states that its mission is to "significantly decrease homelessness throughout King County, using equity and social justice principles."⁸⁰ The KCRHA's theory rests on the assumption that housing is a human right and that if anyone is homeless, someone else must therefore be violating that right. According to the KCRHA, no one should be homeless if there is enough affordable housing. The group's approach is informed by an "equity-based decision making framework" that seeks "to proactively dismantle structural racism and advance equity."⁸¹

Seattle's approach to homelessness is based on the Housing First model, which has been the model adopted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the better part of a decade. HUD describes Housing First as an approach that houses the homeless quickly and "without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements."⁸² In other words, rather than giving recipients a reason to alter the behavior that led to their homelessness, Housing First advocates offer "free" housing with no strings attached.

Researchers have offered various hypotheses about why Housing First policies have failed to reduce overall rates of homelessness. For example:

- According to a 2019 White House report, Housing First programs may initially reduce homelessness, but these short-term reductions can be undone by several possible mechanisms. For instance, “when people are removed from unsheltered environments, the street may become a less difficult place to sleep when it becomes less congested with homeless people who utilize the most sought after spots, again increasing the number of people who remain or fall into homelessness.”⁸³ Also, those on the streets might choose to remain homeless longer than they otherwise would have in order to qualify for permanent supportive housing. And those who do receive supportive housing might be encouraged to remain in their free beds longer than they would have stayed homeless.⁸⁴
- Housing First programs are also inefficient and expensive. Kevin Corinth of the American Enterprise Institute estimates that it takes about 10 units of permanent supportive housing to reduce homelessness by just one person.⁸⁵
- University of Alabama researchers have written that the risks of Housing First programs include “worsening the addiction itself, as the federal collaborative initiative preliminary evaluation seemed to suggest, or failing to progress toward addictive recovery.”⁸⁶
- A recent study in Ottawa, Canada, compared a Housing First group with a nonintervention control group and found that while clients in the Housing First group found housing more quickly and retained housing longer, the comparison group saw a greater decrease in drug use and a greater increase in total quality of life after two years. According to the authors, “One reason for the surprising results related to non-housing outcomes may be that aspects of the Housing First intervention, such as the privacy afforded by Housing First and the harm reduction approach, might result in slower improvements around substance use and mental health.”⁸⁷
- As Christopher Rufo summarizes, studies have consistently shown that “residents of Housing First programs demonstrate reasonably high rates of housing retention, and consistently do *not* demonstrate any improvement in overcoming substance abuse, reduced psychiatric symptoms, or improved general well-being—the ‘human outcomes.’”⁸⁸

Nevertheless, advocates still cling blindly to the Housing First model. The extensive interviews that Michael Shellenberger conducted with Housing First acolytes for his book *San Fransicko* shed light on this blindness. “We support the Housing First model, not involuntary treatment,” American Civil Liberties Union attorney Jamie Crook told Shellenberger. Another ACLU spokesperson said that “no matter how a person falls into homelessness, the root cause is always the scarcity of affordable housing.”⁸⁹

The HUD and ACLU stance on homelessness is reflected in KCRHA’s mission as well as in other outreach programs that Seattle and King County offer. King County’s Familiar Faces Initiative follows an “intensive care model,” which includes services such as “Permanent Supportive Housing from a Housing First Approach,” “Harm Reduction,” and “Culturally Responsive Services” that “Align[] with King County Equity and Social Justice.” The program “center[s] the participants’ self-determination and individual recovery goals.”⁹⁰

Echoing this language, King County’s Health Care for the Homeless Network emphasizes “meeting the homeless where they are”⁹¹ and providing health care to the homeless “on their terms.”⁹² The network is committed to providing “equitable and racially just” services through “a harm-reduction, trauma-informed lens.”⁹³

Harm Reduction

The strategy of harm reduction, which seeks to reduce the negative consequences and “stigma” surrounding drug use,⁹⁴ is a key—and vitally flawed—feature of the Housing First approach. On the federal level, HUD sees harm reduction as “an important part of the Housing First model as it is based on principles of self-determination and individual choice.”⁹⁵ The Department of Health and Human Services lists harm reduction as a pillar of its Overdose Prevention Strategy.⁹⁶

Seattle and King County officials have used this harm-reduction strategy in their homelessness outreach programs. For instance, the Healthcare for the Homeless Network offers “safe injection sites” at several locations in downtown Seattle. This needle-exchange program receives funding from the State of Washington, King County, and the City of Seattle.⁹⁷ Instead of treating the drug addiction, state and local officials simply try to make it safer for people to use drugs by offering sterile syringes. The Seattle and King County Public Health Department also offers fact sheets on how to “safely use” fentanyl⁹⁸ and heroin.⁹⁹

Such efforts are well-meant, at least in part. For instance, harm-reduction programs seek to reduce the spread of blood-borne infections like HIV,

often transmitted by sharing needles, as well as the risk of drug overdose by offering Narcan on site.¹⁰⁰ But these outreach efforts rest on the assumption that drug addiction is a symptom rather than a cause of homelessness. Instead of targeting the addiction itself, harm-reduction advocates seek to destigmatize drug use and make it as “safe” as possible for those who have not obtained permanent housing.¹⁰¹

No Strings Attached

Ultimately, citywide and countywide efforts to eliminate homelessness have failed so egregiously because they rest on faulty assumptions about the nature of the crisis. A lack of affordable housing may be part of the story, but the problem runs much deeper and often includes drug addiction, severe mental illness, and lack of incentive to obey the law. The area’s homeless encampments and open-air drug markets have created an easy and visible incentive for people to indulge in their drug habits. Many suffer from mental illness, which is often a cause and/or effect of substance abuse. Rather than giving these people the help they need, such as mandatory psychological or rehabilitative treatment, Seattle officials have opted for the allegedly “compassionate” approach of enabling addiction and leaving mental illness untreated.¹⁰²

As Alice Baum and Donald Burnes argue, “simply providing housing is not the primary solution to the problem of homelessness because the lack of affordable housing is not the primary cause. Without help for their many disabling conditions, most of the homeless will continue to be unable to maintain themselves in permanent housing.”¹⁰³ Marvin Olasky, a scholar at the Discovery Institute and the Acton Institute, similarly notes that handing out apartments with no requirement to change behavior undermines the goal of eliminating homelessness.

Some hit the streets because they already had serious problems, often including a catastrophic loss of family or community relationships, others sickened under the huge stress of long-term homelessness. Whatever the cause, they need help beyond four walls. Getting them out of sight makes the 99 percent of Americans who are housed feel better, but leaves tens of thousands helpless and hopeless.¹⁰⁴

“The federal policy of Housing First is at the heart of America’s deteriorating homelessness problem,” states a 2022 report from Discovery Institute’s Center on Wealth and Poverty. The report describes how the Housing First

solution to homelessness has become a “housing only” solution in practice. “In essence,” the report states, “we have created an enormous federal homelessness assistance program which is functionally equivalent to HUD Section 8 Housing—but with no rules.”¹⁰⁵

The best assistance is based on the principle of reciprocity rather than a one-way transfer. Yet the federal response to homelessness over the past decade has been a no-strings-attached guarantee of “free housing” with nothing asked of the recipient.¹⁰⁶

Housing First programs have failed primarily because they narrowly target housing as the sole cause of homelessness. As studies and experience on the ground show, homelessness is often due to drug addiction, mental illness, and lack of community support. By failing to address these causes, Housing First advocates craft policies that not only fail to solve the problem, but also waste taxpayer dollars and aggravate the very problems they seek to improve.¹⁰⁷

Doubling Down on Housing First

HUD’s most recent data on the record-high rates of homelessness should make it clear that Housing First policies do not work. Yet Seattle and King County advocates have doubled down on the model. According to University of Washington professor Gregg Colburn, who co-authored the book *Homelessness Is a Housing Problem*, “the concern is that people will then say, ‘Well, obviously, what we’re doing isn’t working.’ And to me, that’s the wrong interpretation.”¹⁰⁸

A spokesperson for Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell has said that the city needs “continued investment” to address the crisis and would welcome “additional federal supports.” Leo Flor, Director of King County’s Department of Community and Human Services, told the *Seattle Times* that they will need to build more affordable housing and pay social service providers enough to address the crisis. “[W]e need to resist narratives that dehumanize people and instead embrace people who experience homelessness as members of our community,” said Flor.¹⁰⁹ For activists and local officials, evidence that Housing First and harm-reduction efforts are not working simply means that the city needs to commit more to these “solutions” with additional funding.

Conflict of Visions

By all accounts, Seattle is dying.¹¹⁰ The destigmatizing of drug use has made the city more dangerous. Despite the funneling of more dollars into

permanent housing, homelessness has only grown worse, and despite efforts to reduce the harm associated with drug use, drug overdose deaths have skyrocketed.

One might think Seattle officials and activists would rethink the Housing First approach, given its patent failures. So why haven't they learned the obvious lessons? Are they self-interested politicians invested in what Christopher Rufo calls "the homeless-industrial complex?"¹¹¹ Are they lazy, choosing to throw money at a problem rather than thinking about real solutions? Are they prostituting themselves for the votes of the liberal intelligentsia and leftists who, for different reasons—the former, guilt; the latter, another step toward the government control of all of life—support Housing First initiatives?

These might be part of the explanation, but there is another answer that might be worse than mere ignorance or stupidity: They are simply so blinded by ideology that they cannot see what is right in front of their noses. Their blind commitment to harm-reduction and Housing First policies looks like a prime example of what Thomas Sowell has called the "unconstrained vision."

As Sowell outlines in *A Conflict of Visions*, two basic visions of human nature help to explain today's political and ideological divides—as much as they did in the 1980s.¹¹² According to Sowell, a vision is a sense, a gut feeling, about causation. Those who espouse a constrained vision recognize the inherent limitations in human nature. Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and the authors of the *Federalist Papers* are among the prime figures who articulated the constrained vision.

Smith, for instance, saw man's self-regard as one unchanging aspect of our nature. Though we are capable of virtue and self-sacrifice, our default is to act according to our own interests. This self-interest is something that will be part of our nature whether we like it or not. After all, everyone must eat, drink, breathe, and sleep. Given this fact, Sowell explains, Smith "attempted to determine how the moral and social benefits desired could be produced in the most efficient way, *within* that constraint."¹¹³ In other words, we cannot guarantee that people will act out of pure charity for the sake of others. But people are more likely to act in socially beneficial ways when there is a real incentive to do so. Thus, "[O]ne of the hallmarks of the constrained vision is that it deals in trade-offs rather than solutions."¹¹⁴

Key to the constrained vision, therefore, is an emphasis on the role that norms and institutions play in guiding civil society. These include the rule of law, families, cultures, and traditions passed from generation to generation. Society cannot change human nature, but if it has a realistic grasp of human

nature, a society can seek rules and institutions that channel incentives and actions in more productive and less destructive ways.

In the unconstrained vision, by contrast, man is ultimately perfectible. This leads to impatience when it comes to trade-offs in the search for the perfect solution. According to this vision, the human being is “highly plastic material,” capable of potentially limitless moral and intellectual progress. “A solution is achieved when it is no longer necessary to make a trade-off, even if the development of that solution entailed costs now past.” Sowell continues: “Given the unconstrained possibilities of man and nature, poverty and other sources of dissatisfaction could only be a result of evil intentions or blindness to solutions readily achievable by changing existing institutions.”¹¹⁵

The assumption in the unconstrained vision is that man is fundamentally good, so we commit evil because of flawed existing systems and institutions. Thus, the key question becomes: What are the special causes of war, poverty, and crime? While the constrained vision recognizes these ailments as part of human existence, there is no reason for these things to persist according to an unconstrained view of human nature.

This helps to explain why, say, Housing First advocates will say they can eliminate homelessness within a decade as long as people commit to their solution. It also explains why well-meaning people can fail again and again to recognize direct evidence that contradicts their visions. Of course, not all who support Housing First programs are truly well-meaning. Pushing homelessness policies under the guise of a rosy, humanitarian vision surely works in favor of those, such as the KCRHA, who lead Seattle’s prominent Housing First programs. Not all homeless activists are so cynical, but there are plenty of actors who have a vested interest in maintaining the “homeless–industrial complex.” As Rufo has observed, “In the world of Seattle homelessness, the big ‘winners’ are social-service providers.... For the executive leadership of these organizations, homelessness is a lucrative business.”¹¹⁶

Regardless of whether one espouses an unconstrained vision in good faith or as a façade, such “solutions” to homelessness ultimately ignore the costs and trade-offs required to accomplish that goal. Even if zero homelessness is a laudable goal, it is unclear why spending millions of dollars on permanent housing will solve the issue if people are homeless because they are addicts, mentally ill, or some combination of both. At best, such solutions are ineffective and waste taxpayer dollars; at worst, they likely make the crisis even more acute by creating perverse incentives that lead to bad consequences.

Which is why those who hold the constrained vision prize prudence so highly. We live in a world of scarcity, and there are facts about human nature that are not going to change. Therefore, the best shot we have at maintaining a peaceful society is to consider trade-offs and the costs that will be incurred by those trade-offs. There will never be an ultimate solution to the trials and turmoil of life, at least this side of the Kingdom of God. So the question is: How, in spite of these evils, do some societies manage to flourish and maintain law and order?

Incentives and Institutions

Let us return to the Broken Windows theory. The success of this theory when it was put into practice in New York City in the 1990s reveals a key truth about the constrained vision of human nature: Incentives and institutions are vital to upholding civil society.

The policing reforms begun and implemented during Mayor Rudy Giuliani's eight-year tenure and carried through for the 12 years that Mike Bloomberg was mayor created an effective incentive structure.¹¹⁷ Upping police presence and cracking down on more crimes disincentivized lawlessness. When even a petty misdemeanor does not pay, the cost of committing worse crimes is much higher.¹¹⁸ Enforcing laws against petty crimes, which might be more common than severe crimes, helps to remind everyone that the cost of crime in the city has gone up—just as the cost of common groceries—milk, eggs, cheese, bread—suggests to consumers that inflation is the problem elsewhere in the economy. Besides, major criminals also commit minor offenses, so making arrests for the latter sometimes catches the former, creating a “twofer” that benefits society.

But proper incentives require more than government and law enforcement. Local communities, bound together by families, neighbors, churches, and other institutions of civil society, create informal checks on behavior and offer positive incentives to act lawfully.

The pioneers of New York's policing reforms understood this. As George Kelling and former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton highlighted in a 1998 essay, “the restoration of assertive policing in 1994 and 1995 interacted with community forces to achieve an unprecedented ‘tipping point’ in violent and other forms of crime” and restore the rule of law to the city.¹¹⁹ “In the final analysis,” they explain, “we believe that we have seen New York City do what cities and communities have traditionally done when confronted by disorder, crime, and mayhem: it has moved to reassert control over disorderly behavior, fear, and crime.”¹²⁰

This goes back to Sowell’s point: that the constrained vision is concerned with the special causes of a peaceful, law-abiding society. The answer requires us to recognize inherent limits to human nature. The Broken Windows theory recognizes that we cannot count on people to behave virtuously when the incentives to do so are absent—or, even worse, when there are more incentives to act viciously.

Those who espouse the unconstrained vision, by contrast, ignore the importance of incentives and the mechanisms by which they are reinforced. Seattle’s lawmakers have led with this “unconstrained” view of human nature for the better part of a decade. Although it may seem compassionate on its face, this vision has ushered in crime and disorder at staggering rates.

Ignoring Incentives, Undermining Institutions

Housing First advocates assume that once people are given the right “solution”—in this case, a roof over their head and a safe way to use drugs—their behavior will change for the better. This assumption is reflected in outreach efforts that emphasize “flexible treatment” and meeting the homeless “on their own terms.” Housing First advocates oppose “involuntary treatment”—as Shellenberger’s interviews reveal—because all of us supposedly will do the right thing if we have the “solution” handed to us.

But what do we really expect will happen when we hand out housing with no requirements for sobriety and, on top of that, encourage drug use through “safe injection” sites? It seems to be a feature of the unconstrained vision to ignore the obvious consequences of such policies.

Just as the unconstrained vision eschews proper incentives for good behavior, it also ignores the institutions that reinforce good behavior. Unconstrained “solutions” to drug abuse and homelessness involve overarching government programs, bypassing the intermediary role of families, neighbors, churches, and civic organizations. Earlier welfare workers, like those who espouse the constrained vision in Sowell’s terms, understood that effective outreach requires active engagement by these local institutions and warned of the serious consequences of top-down government welfare intervention.

- “Relief given without reference to friends and neighbors is accompanied by moral loss,” said Mary Richmond of the Baltimore Charity Organizing Society in 1897. “Poor neighborhoods are doomed to grow poorer whenever the natural ties of neighborliness are weakened by well-meant but unintelligent interference.”¹²¹

- The New Orleans Charity Organization Society declared in 1899 that “[i]ntelligent giving and intelligent withholding are alike true charity. If drink has made a man poor, money will feed not him, but his drunkenness.”¹²²

“[O]ur predecessors made moral demands on recipients of aid,” Marvin Olasky has written of these 19th century volunteers.¹²³ True compassion requires accountability and expectations of improvement—in a word, toughness. Bureaucrats guided by government diktat cannot properly make demands of this sort. As a matter of HUD policy, in fact, subsidized homeless programs *cannot* require any change in behavior on the part of the recipient.¹²⁴

While individuals are normally held responsible within a community, that accountability is weakened—if not eliminated altogether—by government-guaranteed services with no strings attached. In effect, top-down Housing First programs have fueled disorder and addiction on the part of the recipient while undermining the vital role that civil society ought to play in alleviating these problems.

Officials in cities like Seattle should heed the wisdom of earlier social workers who, as Olasky puts it, “saw family, work, freedom, and faith as central to our being, not as ‘lifestyle options.’”¹²⁵ Indeed, mediating institutions play a broader role in civil society. Informal rules of behavior, enforced by local communities, have proven vital in curbing crime and maintaining order.

Religious involvement is one such example. In 2010, two Baylor University researchers conducted a comprehensive review of 270 studies of the link between religion and crime.¹²⁶ They found that approximately 90 percent of the studies established an “inverse or beneficial relationship between religion and some measure of crime or delinquency.” In other words, a vast majority of studies confirm either an inverse correlation between religious involvement and crime rates or the direct effect that religion plays in lowering crime. These findings support the idea that “religious involvement is a relevant protective and prosocial factor.”

Yet, the authors note, the role of religion is largely omitted from current criminological literature. Modern sociologists and criminologists have often treated humans in reductive, materialistic terms rather than as moral agents. Sowell’s description of the unconstrained vision may help to explain this omission.

Specifically, those who espouse an unconstrained vision look for the “special causes” of crime, poverty, and so forth. If human nature is plastic, simply a product of environment and institutions, then the source of crime must lie

within the “system.” Surely, then, we can eliminate crime with the right solution—for example, by providing everyone with enough material resources so that they won’t have to steal. A more rounded-out account of crime, however, must accommodate the moral and spiritual dimensions of our nature. We are not merely products of our environment; we are creatures endowed by nature with an intellect and a will. We are inclined toward vice but can also achieve virtue. We are also social creatures, embedded in families and communities. Thus, institutions like churches can play a vital role in encouraging individual virtue and channeling positive social outcomes.

Admittedly, showing some spine will not save everyone, but the current policy is making matters far worse for everyone—the homeless and anyone who cares about them as individuals (families, friends, former coworkers, and so forth) as well as the people forced to live near homeless encampments because they cannot afford to live in the suburbs where the Housing First acolytes live. The government is making their lives worse—from security, quality-of-life, and financial perspectives—just to salve the consciences of people who will not accept the fact that some ailments cannot be fully eradicated in a fallen world and to enable politicians to euchre the public into believing that what mollifies their feelings of guilt will also solve this problem.

Lessons in Preserving Civil Society

In his 1893 essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Frederick Jackson Turner observed that the Western frontier is the “meeting point between savagery and civilization.”¹²⁷ For Turner, the Western frontier was marked by a perennial rebirth, an “expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society...”¹²⁸ Rule of law and the institutions of civil society keep the savagery in check. But conversely, Shellenberger has warned, “[w]hen our manic character, born of the flight from oppression and the adventure of the Wild West frontier, is unbalanced by more sober virtues, lawlessness and disorder result.”¹²⁹

The American Founders understood that a free, self-governing people depend upon public morality. An effective yet limited government upholds this foundation by protecting our basic rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in *Federalist* No. 15, “Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint.”¹³⁰ Hamilton articulated a constrained vision of human nature—one that recognizes our inherent limitations and the need for proper incentives and institutions to keep us in line. As Sowell writes, “Social rules are as central

to the constrained vision as unfettered individual judgment and individual conscience are at the heart of the unconstrained vision.”¹³¹

Seattle and other West Coast blue cities have been the subjects of experiments designed to test the unconstrained vision. Rather than focusing on what worked before, their leaders decided to experiment with progressive reforms in the areas of law enforcement, crime, drugs, and homelessness.

In the name of “equity” and “social justice,” Seattle lawmakers have undermined those conditions that provided a safe environment in which prosperity could bloom as recently as the 1990s. Specifically, the city:

- Loosened its drug laws and reinforcement mechanisms.
- Crippled its police force by making drastic cuts in the department and dissuading officers from cracking down on “small” crimes. Many police officers attest that they feel the city has prevented them from doing their jobs.
- Has spent millions of taxpayer dollars on housing projects to eliminate homelessness that often fail to be completed and, more crucially, fail to address the underlying causes of homelessness. Seemingly compassionate Housing First and harm-reduction policies that offer “safe injection” sites and “free housing” have only enabled drug addicts to continue their destructive habits.
- Has punished businesses by imposing burdensome tax measures and allowing crime and disorder to proliferate on the streets. The exodus of businesses in turn has further crippled the city. Spots that were once hubs for business and growth have been replaced by homeless encampments and open-air drug dens.

A functioning society depends on rule of law, respect for private property, and strong mediating institutions. When these things erode, civilization erodes with it. As we see in Seattle, once public disorder gets out of hand, it becomes a vicious cycle that further reinforces lawlessness and decay.

To avoid this fate, political leaders must work with rather than against the inherent constraints of human nature. This is an act of prudence, a virtue by which we consider the best course of action and consider consequences and trade-offs. As Edmund Burke put it, “Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all.”¹³²

In a world of scarcity, limited resources, and a limited human nature, the prudent statesman asks: How can we achieve beneficial outcomes within these constraints, and what are those conditions of human prosperity that have worked time and time again? The prudent man will appreciate the hard-won wisdom of past generations and avoid new “solutions” that eschew trade-offs and the basic facts of human nature.

Conclusion

If Seattle is past the point of repair, we now know why. Current leaders theoretically could muster the political will to repair enough “broken windows” and bring the city back from the brink. That would surely be an inspiring lesson. But any such feat in a place like Seattle would require immense amounts of moral and political courage on the part of both lawmakers and citizens generally. It seems more likely that Seattle will not return to its original prosperity.

The Emerald City may then serve as a valuable lesson in what *not* to do. Leaders and residents of other cities should take heed and preserve those things that have made their cities peaceful and prosperous. When institutions of civil society and government erode, broken windows abound, and once this process is underway, disorder spreads like a virus. Cities that want to avoid the same fate as the Emerald City’s might therefore want to repair their windows as soon as they are broken.

Gillian Richards is a Research Associate in the B. Kenneth Simon Center for American Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

Endnotes

1. Matt Markovich, "Travis Berge: Suspect in Cal Anderson Murder Led Troubled, Drug-Fueled Life in Seattle," KOMO News, updated September 18, 2020, <https://komonews.com/news/operation-crime-justice/travis-berge-suspect-in-cal-anderson-murder-led-troubled-drug-fueled-life> (accessed April 17, 2024). Hana Kim reports that Berge had "nearly 40 criminal convictions since 2014," most of which were misdemeanors. Hana Kim, "Sources: Person of Interest Found Dead After Seattle Homicide Is Prolific Repeat Offender," FOX 13 Seattle, updated September 17, 2020, <https://www.fox13seattle.com/news/sources-person-of-interest-found-dead-after-seattle-homicide-is-prolific-repeat-offender> (accessed April 17, 2024).
2. Scott P. Lindsay, *System Failure: Report on Prolific Offenders in Seattle's Criminal Justice System*, February 2019, <https://downtownseattle.org/files/advocacy/system-failure-prolific-offender-report-feb-2019.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2024).
3. Eric Johnson, "KOMO News Special: Seattle Is Dying," updated March 20, 2019, <https://komonews.com/news/local/komo-news-special-seattle-is-dying> (accessed April 17, 2024).
4. Dave Wagner, "Meth, Mental Illness and Murder: How One Prolific Offender Was Given Chance After Chance," KIRO 7 News, October 12, 2020, <https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/meth-mental-illness-murder-how-one-prolific-offender-was-given-chance-after-chance/OLUJ2GQJ2JHTJFXW2YUD7GCVPM/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
5. George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic*, March 1982, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
6. There is ample literature on the effects of the Broken Windows reforms implemented by Chief of Police William Bratton under Mayor Rudy Giuliani's tenure. In New York City between 1990 and 1999, homicide dropped by 73 percent, burglary dropped by 66 percent, assault dropped by 40 percent, robbery declined by 67 percent, and vehicle theft fell by 73 percent. Hope Corman and Naci Mocan, "Carrots, Sticks and Broken Windows," National Bureau of Economic Research *Working Paper* No. 9061, July 2002, p. 22, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w9061> (accessed April 17, 2024). To be sure, Broken Windows reforms alone do not account for all of this decline. For instance, the New York state legislature passed a series of laws during this period that increased penalties for conviction of violent crime. Crime was also dropping across the U.S. from the early 1990s to 2000. However, the decline in crime in New York City was nearly *double* the national average and continued through 2004. Per Berkeley Law Professor Franklin Zimring, distinctly local phenomena must account for about half of NYC's decline in crime. Franklin E. Zimring, "The City that Became Safe: New York and the Future of Crime Control," New York University School of Law, Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law & Justice, *Working Paper* No. 09-11, 2011, <https://www.law.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/siwp/WP9Zimring.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2024).
7. In 2013, Seattle's outgoing mayor "dubbed himself 'the most progressive mayor in America,'" and "[t]he incoming mayor one-upped that by saying he would remake Seattle into 'the most progressive city in America.'" Danny Westneat, "Seattle Is the Most Progressive City No More," *The Seattle Times*, November 7, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-is-the-most-progressive-city-no-more/> (accessed January 10, 2024). Emphasis in original.
8. Hanna Love and Tracy Hadden Loh, "Homelessness in US Cities and Downtowns," Brookings Institution Future of Downtowns Project, December 7, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/homelessness-in-us-cities-and-downtowns/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
9. Paul J. Larkin, "Camping and the Constitution," *Georgetown Journal of Law & Public Policy*, forthcoming 2024, p. 15, <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/public-policy-journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2024/02/Paul-J.-Larkin.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2024).
10. News release, "Dunn 'Deeply Concerned' About King County Regional Homelessness Authority's Jaw-Dropping \$11.8 Billion Price Tag to End Homelessness," Metropolitan King County Council, January 26, 2023, <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/council/news/2023/january/1-26-dunn-statement-kcrha-billions-homelessness-funding> (accessed April 17, 2024).
11. Anna Patrick, "WA's Homeless Population Is Increasing, New HUD Report Shows," *The Seattle Times*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/was-homeless-population-is-increasing-new-hud-report-shows/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
12. Robert Marbut and Caitlin Cory, "Generous Donation Gone to Waste on Bad Homelessness Policy," Discovery Institute Fix Homelessness Blog, March 28, 2022, <https://fixhomelessness.org/2022/generous-donation-gone-to-waste-on-bad-homelessness-policy/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
13. Patrick, "WA's Homeless Population Is Increasing." See also Anna Patrick, "HUD Reports Record-High Homeless Count in 2023 for U.S., WA," *The Seattle Times*, December 19, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/hud-reports-record-high-homeless-count-in-2023-for-u-s-wa/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
14. Greg Kim, "Should Seattle Reconsider Safe Drug-Consumption Sites? We Look at Vancouver's Example," *The Seattle Times*, December 10, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/should-seattle-reconsider-safe-drug-consumption-sites-we-look-at-vancouvers-example> (accessed April 17, 2024).
15. Jamie Housen, "Mayor Harrell Announces Efforts to Improve Addiction Treatment, Proposes Legislation to Reduce Public Consumption of Fentanyl and Other Illegal Drugs," Office of the Mayor, Seattle, July 31, 2023, <https://harrell.seattle.gov/2023/07/31/mayor-harrell-announces-efforts-to-improve-addiction-treatment-proposes-legislation-to-reduce-public-consumption-of-fentanyl-and-other-illegal-drugs> (accessed April 17, 2024).

16. Anna Patrick, "Fentanyl Has Devastated King County's Homeless Population, and the Toll Is Getting Worse," *The Seattle Times*, May 21, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/fentanyl-has-devastated-king-countys-homeless-population-and-the-toll-is-getting-worse/> (accessed April 17, 2024). See also Anna Patrick, "More Homeless People Died in King County in 2022 than Ever Recorded Before," *The Seattle Times*, January 16, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/more-homeless-people-died-in-king-county-in-2022-than-ever-recorded-before> (accessed April 17, 2024).
17. Seattle Police Department, *Crime Report 2022*, February 2023, https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Police/Reports/2022_SPD_CRIME_REPORT_FINAL.pdf (accessed April 17, 2024).
18. Christina Coulter, "Seattle Homicides to Surpass 3-Decade High Among Nationwide Crime Spike," Fox News, December 14, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/seattle-homicides-surpass-three-decade-high-nationwide-crime-spike> (accessed April 17, 2024).
19. Benjamin Cassidy, "What Happened to Defunding the Seattle Police Department?" *Seattle Met*, March 21, 2023, <https://www.seattlemet.com/news-and-city-life/2023/03/defund-the-police-spd-seattle-movement> (accessed April 17, 2024).
20. Jon Talton, "Seattle Faces a Moment of Truth to Save Downtown," *The Seattle Times*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattle-faces-a-moment-of-truth-to-save-downtown/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
21. Ron Sims, "Managing High-Tech Growth in King County," Brookings Institution *Commentary*, June 1, 2000, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/managing-high-tech-growth-in-king-county/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Gregory Lewis McNamee, "History of Seattle," *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Seattle-Washington/History> (accessed April 17, 2024).
25. Tom Alberg, "The Flywheel Propelled Seattle into a Tech Boom. Who's Next?" Built In, November 2, 2021, <https://builtin.com/corporate-innovation/flywheel> (accessed April 17, 2024).
26. Seattle Police Department, "Seattle Police Department—Major Crimes a 25 Year Review," p. 3, https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Police/crime/Crime_1988_2012.pdf (accessed April 17, 2024).
27. Ibid., p. 2.
28. Tom Griffin, "Crime Rates Are Down; UW Sociologists Try to Explain Why," *University of Washington Magazine*, March 1, 1997, <https://magazine.washington.edu/crime-rates-are-down-uw-sociologists-try-to-explain-why/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
29. Sarah Grace Taylor and Daniel Beekman, "Kshama Sawant Will Not Seek Reelection to Seattle City Council," *The Seattle Times*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/sawant-will-not-seek-reelection-to-seattle-city-council/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
30. Socialist Alternative and Kshama Sawant, "Speech by Seattle City Councilmember Sawant on \$15 Victory," Socialist Alternative, June 3, 2014, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/2014/06/03/speech-by-socialist-seattle-city-councilmember-kshama-sawant/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
31. Seattle City Council, "Progressive Tax on Businesses," Past Issues, <https://www.seattle.gov/council/issues/past-issues/progressive-tax-on-business> (accessed April 17, 2024). According to the City Council website, "A Progressive Tax on Business is the best remaining tool to address [the homeless] crisis." Infographic, "Why Does Seattle Have an Obligation to Address Homelessness?" Seattle City Council, https://council.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Progressive-Tax-on-Business_Infographic.pdf (accessed April 17, 2024).
32. Daniel Beekman, "About-Face: Seattle City Council Repeals Head Tax Amid Pressure from Businesses, Referendum Threat," *The Seattle Times*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/about-face-seattle-city-council-repeals-head-tax-amid-pressure-from-big-businesses/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
33. MyNorthwest Staff, "Payroll Tax on Seattle's Biggest Earners Funds \$97 Million in Affordable Housing," MyNorthwest News, July 25, 2022, <https://mynorthwest.com/3575464/payroll-tax-seattle-jumpstart-affordable-housing/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
34. Melissa Santos, "Tech Slump Takes Toll on Seattle's Big Business Tax," Axios Seattle, April 21, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2023/04/21/seattle-jumpstart-tax-amazon-stocks-decline> (accessed April 17, 2024).
35. Paul Roberts and Lauren Rosenblatt, "Amazon Pulling out of Downtown Seattle Office Tower near HQ," *The Seattle Times*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/amazon-pulling-out-of-downtown-seattle-office-tower-near-hq/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
36. Lauren Rosenblatt, "Citing Crime Concerns, Amazon Pulls Workers from Office at Former Macy's in Downtown Seattle," *The Seattle Times*, March 15, 2022, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/citing-crime-concerns-amazon-pulls-workers-from-office-at-former-site-of-seattle-macys/> (accessed April 17, 2024).
37. Alex Halverson, "Amazon Moves About 100 Workers After Terminating South Lake Union Office Lease," *Puget Sound Business Journal*, August 29, 2023, <https://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2023/08/29/amazon-south-lake-union-lease-exit.html> (accessed April 18, 2024).
38. KIRO 7 News Staff, "Amazon to Move 2,000 Employees from Seattle to Bellevue Offices," May 3, 2023, <https://www.kiro7.com/news/amazon-move-2000-employees-seattle-bellevue-offices/7H5F36RBC5DPVE02F2NESFUQFA/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
39. Spencer Soper, "Amazon's Jeff Bezos Announces Move to Miami from Seattle," Yahoo! Finance, November 3, 2023, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/amazon-jeff-bezos-announces-move-005243490.html> (accessed April 18, 2024).

40. Eric Wilkinson, "More Businesses Flee Seattle Because of Crime and Violence," King 5 News, February 11, 2021, <https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/businesses-flee-seattle-because-of-crime-and-violence/281-f26816fe-b3a4-4b49-930e-345b5fc16969> (accessed April 18, 2024).
41. KING 5 Staff, "Here Are the Major Seattle Retailers that Have Closed Stores in 2023," updated September 28, 2023, <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/major-seattle-retailers-closed-stores-2023/281-8f94d2cd-bace-41e7-a7a2-44ad3125fe5b> (accessed April 18, 2024).
42. Ibid.
43. Lindsay, *System Failure: Report on Prolific Offenders in Seattle's Criminal Justice System*, p. 3.
44. Scott P. Lindsay, *System Failure Part 2: Declines, Delays, and Dismissals—Why Most Seattle Misdemeanor Cases Never Get Resolved and the Impacts on Public Safety*, September 2019, p. 8, <https://cdn.downtownseattle.org/files/advocacy/System-Failure-Part-2-Declines-Delays-and-Dismissals-Sept-2019.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
45. Lindsay, *System Failure: Report on Prolific Offenders in Seattle's Criminal Justice System*, p. 5.
46. Christopher F. Rufo, "Seattle Under Siege," *City Journal*, Autumn 2018, <https://www.city-journal.org/article/seattle-under-siege> (accessed April 18, 2024).
47. Daniel Beekman, "How to Fight Downtown Crime? New Strategy Amid Debate," *The Seattle Times*, April 16, 2015, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-officials-point-fingers-over-cause-of-increased-downtown-crime/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
48. James Argento-McCurdy, "Did Seattle Just End, 'Defund the Police?'" *The Spectator*, October 12, 2022, <https://seattlespectator.com/2022/10/12/did-seattle-just-end-defund-the-police/> (accessed April 18, 2024). The Spectator is Seattle University's student newspaper.
49. Cassidy, "What Happened to Defunding the Seattle Police Department?"
50. David Kroman, "Seattle Cuts, but Doesn't 'Defund,' Police Budget in 2021," Cascade PBS, November 19, 2020, <https://crosscut.com/news/2020/11/seattle-cuts-doesnt-defund-police-budget-2021> (accessed April 18, 2024).
51. Bridget Chavez, "Plan to Cut 80 Vacant Police Officer Positions from Seattle City Budget Faces Pushback," KIRO 7 News, December 5, 2022, <https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/plan-cut-80-vacant-police-officer-positions-seattle-city-budget-faces-pushback/3U5ETRCZNVEI3OLYHK6P5ZS5TE/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
52. Frank Sumrall, "Councilmember on SPD Budget Cuts: 'This Will Make People Less Safe,'" KIRO Newsradio, December 8, 2022, <https://mynorthwest.com/3744854/spd-loses-80-jobs-budget-cuts-public-safety-advocates-rage/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
53. City of Seattle, "Seattle Police Recruitment and Retention Plan," 2022, <https://harrell.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2022/07/SPD-Recruitment-and-Retention-Plan.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024). The plan was released by the office of Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell on July 13, 2022. Jamie Housen, "Mayor Bruce Harrell Shares Details of Comprehensive Police Recruitment and Retention Plan," Office of the Mayor, Seattle, July 13, 2022, <https://harrell.seattle.gov/2022/07/13/mayor-bruce-harrell-shares-details-of-comprehensive-police-recruitment-and-retention-plan/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
54. Jonathan Choe, "Seattle's Unending Drug Crisis," Discovery Institute Fix Homelessness Blog, August 19, 2022, <https://fixhomelessness.org/2022/seattles-unending-drug-crisis/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
55. *Seattle Times* Editorial Board, "Seattle's Persistent Crime Problem Demands Change," *The Seattle Times*, April 19, 2019, <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/editorials/seattles-persistent-crime-problem-demands-change/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
56. Sarah Grace Taylor, "Harrell Says He 'Inherited a Mess,' Will Solve Crime Issues by Putting Arrests First, Social Services Second," *The Seattle Times*, March 6, 2022, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/harrell-says-he-inherited-a-mess-will-solve-crime-issues-by-putting-arrests-first-social-services-second/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
57. Ibid.
58. Michael Shellenberger, *San Fransicko: Why Progressives Ruin Cities* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021), p. 262.
59. *State of Washington v. Shannon B. Blake*, 197 Wash.2d 170, 481 P.3d 521 (2021), <https://casetext.com/case/state-v-blake-92221> (accessed April 18, 2024).
60. Joseph O'Sullivan, "Washington Lawmakers Make Drug Possession a Gross Misdemeanor," Cascade PBS, May 16, 2023, <https://crosscut.com/politics/2023/05/washington-lawmakers-make-drug-possession-gross-misdemeanor> (accessed April 18, 2024).
61. Ibid.
62. See Conrad Wilson, "Oregon Pioneered a Radical Drug Policy. Now It's Reconsidering," NPR, February 7, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/02/07/1229655142/oregon-pioneered-a-radical-drug-policy-now-its-reconsidering> (accessed April 18, 2024). Wilson writes that "Oregon voters passed the most liberal drug law in the country in November 2020, decriminalizing possession for small amounts of hard drugs.... But more than three years later, the drug crisis in Oregon—like many other places battling the fentanyl crisis—has gotten worse. And that's prompted a fierce political debate in Oregon about whether Measure 110 has succeeded or failed."
63. Josh Cohen, "Seattle City Council Passes Law to Prosecute Drug Use, Possession," Cascade PBS, September 19, 2023, <https://crosscut.com/politics/2023/09/seattle-city-council-passes-law-prosecute-drug-use-possession> (accessed April 18, 2024).

64. David Gutman, "'Threat of Harm' Should Be Present Before Seattle Drug Arrests, Mayor Harrell Says," *The Seattle Times*, September 28, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/threat-of-harm-should-be-present-before-seattle-drug-arrests-mayor-harrell-says/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
65. Jonathan Choe, "International District Drug Den Active Hours After Nearby Shooting," Discovery Institute Fix Homelessness Blog, October 3, 2023, <https://fixhomelessness.org/2023/international-district-drug-den-active-hours-after-nearby-shooting/> (accessed January 4, 2024).
66. Jonathan Choe, "Seattle Dealers Sell Fentanyl Out of Walk up Window Downtown," Discovery Institute Fix Homelessness Blog, August 15, 2023, <https://fixhomelessness.org/2023/seattle-dealers-sell-fentanyl-out-of-walk-up-window-tent/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
67. Choe, "Seattle's Unending Drug Crisis."
68. Rufo, "Seattle Under Siege."
69. City of Seattle, Human Services Department, *2016 Homeless Needs Assessment*, produced by Applied Survey Research, 2017, <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/HumanServices/CDBG/CityOfSeattle2016-HomelessNeedsAssessment.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024). See also Stephanie Klein, "Seattle Survey: Over Half of Homeless Admit to Using Drugs, Alcohol," MyNorthwest News, updated March 5, 2017, <https://mynorthwest.com/562868/over-half-of-homeless-admit-to-using-drugs-alcohol/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
70. Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke, "Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the U.S.," California Policy Lab *Policy Brief*, October 2019, <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Health-Conditions-Among-Unsheltered-Adults-in-the-U.S..pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
71. *Ibid.*, p. 4. Emphasis added. Physical health issues are also cited as a reason for homelessness. According to the report, the unsheltered were "more than four times as likely to report that physical health conditions had contributed to loss of housing" compared to those in shelters. *Ibid.*
72. Kenneth Paul Rosenberg with Jessica DuLong, *Bedlam: An Intimate Journey into America's Mental Health Crisis* (New York: Avery, 2019), p. 82.
73. Alice S. Baum and Donald W. Burnes, *A Nation in Denial: The Truth About Homelessness* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), p. 3.
74. See, for example, Christopher F. Rufo, "The 'Housing First' Approach Has Failed: Time to Reform Federal Policy and Make It Work for Homeless Americans," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 3513, August 4, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/housing/report/the-housing-first-approach-has-failed-time-reform-federal-policy-and-make-it-work>.
75. Change Washington, "Time to Stop Funding Homeless Efforts That Are Not Working," October 4, 2020, <https://www.changewashington.org/time-to-stop-funding-homeless-efforts-that-are-not-working/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
76. Chris Daniels, "Seattle Spent Nearly \$1 Billion on Homelessness, but Number of Unsheltered Grew," KOMO News, updated April 9, 2023, <https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-homeless-crisis-spent-a-billion-dollars-on-homelessness-but-numbers-of-unsheltered-grew-washington-king-county-homeless-budget-money-citywide-spending-human-services-department-decade-labor-contract-state-of-emergency-organizations-people-living> (accessed April 18, 2024).
77. Rachel Sheffield, *Finding Home: Helping the Homeless Improve Their Lives and Reconnect with Community*, U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee Republicans, Social Capital Project, December 2022, p. 31, https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/59950ff2-da5e-4e1e-8f4a-61452c3156d3/finding-home.pdf (accessed April 18, 2024).
78. Marbut and Cory, "Generous Donation Gone to Waste on Bad Homelessness Policy." See also U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. *The 2020 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness*, January 2021, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024), and Scott Greenstone, "How Much Do Seattle and King County Spend on Homelessness?" *The Seattle Times*, November 8, 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/how-much-do-seattle-and-king-county-spend-on-homelessness/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
79. Emily Green, "Kshama Sawant Is a Warrior for the Working Class," *Street Roots*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.streetroots.org/news/2017/09/21/kshama-sawant-warrior-working-class> (accessed April 18, 2024).
80. King County Regional Housing Authority, "About Us," <https://kcrha.org/about/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
81. King County Regional Housing Authority, "Our Approach," <https://kcrha.org/about/our-approach/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
82. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD Exchange, "Housing First in Permanent Supportive Housing Brief," July 2014, p. 1, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3892/housing-first-in-permanent-supportive-housing-brief/> (accessed April 18, 2024). See also United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, "Housing First Checklist: Assessing Projects and Systems for a Housing First Orientation," updated September 2016, https://www.usich.gov/sites/default/files/document/Housing_First_Checklist_FINAL.pdf (accessed April 18, 2024).
83. U.S. Executive Office of the President, Council of Economic Advisers, *The State of Homelessness in America*, September 2019, p. 25, <https://www.nhipdata.org/local/upload/file/The-State-of-Homelessness-in-America.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
84. *Ibid.*
85. Kevin Corinth, "The Impact of Permanent Supportive Housing on Homeless Populations," *Journal of Housing Economics*, Vol. 35 (March 2017), pp. 69–84, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhe.2017.01.006> (accessed April 18, 2024).

86. Stefan G. Kertesz, Kimberly Crouch, Jesse B. Milby, Robert E. Cusimano, and Joseph E. Schumacher, "Housing First for Homeless Persons with Active Addiction: Are We Overreaching?" *The Milbank Quarterly*, Vol. 87, No. 2 (June 2009), p. 522, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2881444/> (accessed April 18, 2024); Alvin S. Mares, Greg A. Greenberg, and Robert A. Rosenheck, *HUD/HHS/VA Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness, National Performance Outcomes Assessment: Is System Integration Associated with Client Outcomes?*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, June 15, 2007, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/CICH07/index.htm> (accessed April 18, 2024).
87. Rebecca A. Cherner, Tim Aubry, John Sylvestre, Rob Boyd, and Donna Pettey, "Housing First for Adults with Problematic Substance Use," *Journal of Dual Diagnosis*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (July–September 2017), pp. 219–229, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28414579/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
88. Rufo, "The 'Housing First' Approach Has Failed: Time to Reform Federal Policy and Make It Work for Homeless Americans," p. 5.
89. Shellenberger, *San Francisco: Why Progressives Ruin Cities*, pp. 117–118.
90. King County Department of Community and Human Services, "The Vital Program: Behavioral Health and Recovery Division," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/community-human-services/mental-health-substance-abuse/diversion-reentry-services/vital-program.aspx> (accessed April 18, 2024).
91. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Healthcare for the Homeless Network (HCHN): Health Services and Resources for People Living <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/health-services-for-the-homeless/healthcare-for-the-homeless/services> (accessed April 18, 2024).
92. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Healthcare for the Homeless Network (HCHN): The Street Medicine Team," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/health-services-for-the-homeless/healthcare-for-the-homeless/mobile-medical-care/street-medicine-team> (accessed April 18, 2024).
93. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Healthcare for the Homeless Network (HCHN): Health Engagement Action Resource Team (HEART)," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/health-services-for-the-homeless/healthcare-for-the-homeless/heart> (accessed April 18, 2024).
94. See, for example, National Harm Reduction Coalition, "Principles of Harm Reduction," <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
95. Fact Sheet, "Housing First and Harm Reduction," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS, <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HOPWA-Factsheet-Housing-First-and-Harm-Reduction.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
96. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Overdose Prevention Strategy: Harm Reduction," <https://www.hhs.gov/overdose-prevention/harm-reduction> (accessed April 18, 2024).
97. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Needle Exchange, Drug Use and Harm Reduction: King County Needle Exchange," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/communicable-diseases/hiv-std/patients/drug-use-harm-reduction/needle-exchange.aspx> (accessed April 18, 2024).
98. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Fentanyl Warning," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/communicable-diseases/hiv-std/patients/drug-use-harm-reduction/-/media/depts/health/communicable-diseases/documents/hivstd/fentanyl-facts.ashx> (accessed April 18, 2024).
99. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Botulism Warning," <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/communicable-diseases/hiv-std/patients/drug-use-harm-reduction/-/media/depts/health/communicable-diseases/documents/hivstd/wound-botulism-warning.ashx> (accessed April 18, 2024).
100. Public Health—Seattle & King County, "Needle Exchange, Drug Use and Harm Reduction: King County Needle Exchange."
101. See Keith Humphreys and Jonathan Caulkins, "Destigmatizing Drug Use Has Been a Profound Mistake," *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/12/destigmatizing-drug-use-mistake-opioid-crisis/676292/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
102. Steven J. Buri, "What Does Real Compassion for the Homeless Look Like?" Discovery Institute Wealth & Poverty Review Blog, May 20, 2022, <https://wealthandpoverty.center/2022/05/20/what-does-real-compassion-for-the-homeless-look-like/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
103. Baum and Burnes, *A Nation in Denial: The Truth About Homelessness*, p. 137.
104. Marvin Olasky, "One Size Does Not Fit All," Discovery Institute Fix Homelessness Blog, September 22, 2023, <https://fixhomelessness.org/2023/one-size-does-not-fit-all/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
105. Discovery Institute, Center on Wealth & Poverty, *How Congress Can Reform Government's Misguided Homelessness Policies*, 2022, p. 4, <https://www.discovery.org/m/securepdfs/2022/10/How-Congress-Can-Reform-Governments-Misguided-Homelessness-Policies-20221011.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
106. Lisa Schiffrin, "6 Steps to Reduce Homeless Epidemic," Newsmax *Think Tank Series*, May 2023, <https://content.yudu.com/web/vbfr/0Avok3/NMX0523/html/index.html?page=42&origin=reader> (accessed April 18, 2024).
107. Wesley Smith, "'Housing First' Policy Is Not Helping the Homeless," *Public Discourse*, July 31, 2023, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2023/07/90060/> (accessed April 18, 2024). See also Wesley J. Smith, "'Housing First' Caused the Homelessness Catastrophe," Discovery Institute, October 26, 2022, <https://www.discovery.org/a/housing-first-caused-the-homelessness-catastrophe/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
108. Patrick, "HUD Reports Record-High Homeless Count in 2023 for U.S., WA."
109. *Ibid.*

110. San Francisco has undergone a similar process of decay, described as a “doom loop.” Jim Carlton and Katherine Bindley, “Can San Francisco Save Itself From the Doom Loop?” *The Wall Street Journal*, updated August 13, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/san-francisco-crime-downtown-doom-loop-e5fcd7ba> (accessed April 18, 2024).
111. Rufo, “Seattle Under Siege.”
112. Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).
113. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13. Emphasis in original.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 23.
116. Rufo, “Seattle Under Siege.”
117. Various scholars have debated the extent to which broken windows policing influenced New York City’s decline in crime. See, for example, Bernard E. Harcourt, *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Charles C. Lanfear, Ross L. Matsueda, and Lindsey R. Beach, “Broken Windows, Informal Social Control, and Crime: Assessing Causality in Empirical Studies,” *Annual Review of Criminology*, Vol. 3 (January 2020), pp. 97–120, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8059646/> (accessed April 18, 2024); and Hope Corman and Naci Mocan, “Carrots, Sticks and Broken Windows.” Despite varying studies, it is hard to deny that the Broken Windows reforms played a significant (if not exclusive) role in bringing crime down in New York City. Malcolm Gladwell helps to clarify this point: To explain New York’s sharp drop in violence, we need to start thinking about crime differently and realize “that social problems behave like infectious agents.” Seemingly trivial efforts to crack down on small things plausibly led to a “tipping point” in the city, demonstrating that “it is the nature of nonlinear phenomena that sometimes the most modest changes can bring about enormous effects.” Malcolm Gladwell, “The Tipping Point,” *The New Yorker*, May 26, 1996, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/06/03/the-tipping-point> (accessed April 18, 2024).
118. Studies that seek to debunk Broken Windows theory sometimes equate it with “zero tolerance” policies, which involve aggressively policing disorder by ticketing or arresting all violators. However, the central premise of Broken Windows is more nuanced than simple zero tolerance. As William Bratton and George Kelling have outlined, Broken Windows theory is fundamentally about restoring accountability and trust between police and communities. See William J. Bratton, *Broken Windows and Quality-of-Life Policing in New York City*, New York City Police Department, 2015, https://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/qol.pdf (accessed April 18, 2024), and George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows” and Police Discretion, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice Research Report, NCJ 178259, October 1999, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/178259.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2024).
119. George L. Kelling and William J. Bratton, “Declining Crime Rates: Insiders’ Views of the New York City Story,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Summer 1998), p. 1228, <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc/vol88/iss4/3> (accessed April 25, 2024).
120. *Ibid.*, p. 1227.
121. Marvyn Olasky, “The New Welfare Debate: How to Practice Effective Compassion,” *Imprimis*, Vol. 24, No. 9 (September 1995), <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/the-new-welfare-debate-how-to-practice-effective-compassion/> (accessed April 18, 2024).
122. *Ibid.*
123. *Ibid.*
124. The very term “homeless” reflects an assumption that everyone who is unhoused is afflicted by the same condition: lack of housing. As Michael Shellenberger shows, progressive advocates coined the word “homeless” to tee up an agenda for subsidized public housing. “The word ‘homeless’ not only makes us think of housing, it also makes us *not* think of mental illness, drugs, and disaffiliation.” Shellenberger, *San Fransicko: Why Progressives Ruin Cities*, pp. 135–136.
125. Olasky, “The New Welfare Debate: How to Practice Effective Compassion.”
126. Byron R. Johnson and Sung Joon Jang, “Crime and Religion: Assessing the Role of the Faith Factor,” in *Contemporary Issues in Criminological Theory and Research: The Role of Social Institutions, Papers from the American Society of Criminology 2010 Conference*, ed. Richard Rosenfeld, Kenna Quinet, and Crystal Garcia (Wadsworth, CA: Cengage Learning, 2010), pp. 117–149, https://www.baylorisr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Jang-and-Johnson_Religion-and-Crime1.pdf (accessed April 18, 2024).
127. Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” paper read at meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago during the World Columbian Exposition, July 12, 1893, <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf> (accessed April 22, 2024).
128. *Ibid.*
129. Shellenberger, *San Fransicko: Why Progressives Ruin Cities*, p. 286.
130. Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* No. 15, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed15.asp (accessed April 18, 2024).
131. Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, p. 85.
132. Edmund Burke, “An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,” August 1791, in Edmund Burke, *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Daniel E. Ritchie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992), p. 91, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/660/0006_Bk.pdf (accessed April 18, 2024).