



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

ARCHAEOLOGIST Dave Nichols surveys the remains of the historic Kousch House, destroyed during the massive York wildfire in July.

Housing supply shortage worsens in state

Developers built fewer homes in 2023, potentially leading to rising prices and rents.

BY ANDREW KHOURI

Ken Kahan makes a living building homes.

A specialty? Luxury apartment complexes in Los Angeles neighborhoods such as Palms and Silver Lake filled with mostly market-rate units, but with a handful of income-restricted affordable ones as well.

It can be a good business, but lately less so.

"We have pulled back," said Kahan, the president of California Landmark Group. "The metrics don't work."

Across California and the nation, developers moved to start fewer homes in 2023, a decline some experts say could eventually send home prices and rents even higher as supply shortages worsen.

Developers cite several reasons for delaying new projects. There's high labor and material costs, as well as new local regulations that together make it harder to turn a profit.

Perhaps the biggest factor — and one hitting across the country — is the high cost of borrowing. Rising interest rates not only make it more expensive for Americans to buy a home, but they also add additional costs for developers who must shell out more money to build and manage their projects.

As a result, fewer projects [See Housing, A5]

Yes, the desert can burn — and the Mojave faces an uncertain future

The Kousch House stood in the Mojave Desert for nearly a century — first as the residence of a prominent homesteader, then as testament to humanity's ability to survive harsh and forbidding environments. Now, all that remains of the landmark is a limestone chimney surrounded by charred rubble.

In July, the massive York fire raced through the area, obliterating an old silver mine and other historical structures and torching vast tracks of Joshua trees, whose blackened arms still rise skyward as if in surrender.

The blaze was the largest in a series of wildfires that have become increasingly common in this corner of the desert as

Scientists are learning on the fly as they struggle to maintain the ecosystem amid rapidly changing conditions

By Alex Wigglesworth
REPORTING FROM MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE, CALIF.

climate change brings hotter, drier conditions and more extreme swings in precipitation. Forecasters fear the next few fire seasons could be particularly active for California deserts, as two years of above-normal precipitation have fueled the growth of grasses and small shrubs that will dry out in the spring and summer.

Since 2005, more than 200,000 acres have burned in and around the Mojave National Preserve; fires have destroyed lush pinyon pine and juniper woodlands, desert tortoise habitat and ancient petroglyphs.

For those unaccustomed to watching [See Mojave, A7]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

GREAT-NIECE Pamela Clark holds up a photo of Ruby Scott while tearfully speaking of her life as Scott's killer listens at a sentencing hearing in January.

COLUMN ONE

Why did case of Ruby Scott's slaying languish for years?

File sat dormant after three people were cleared

BY CINDY CHANG

Neighbors knew Ruby Scott as the petite old lady who swept her driveway every day, who pushed her broom up and down the street even if she just moved the trash to a different place.

That anyone would want to harm Miss Ruby, 81, seemed unthinkable. Yet someone stabbed her all over her head and hands and smashed her skull in the converted garage in Watts that she called

home.

Seven months after her death, the Los Angeles Police Department announced the arrests of three young brothers who lived on her block.

"Old-fashioned police work" and some physical evidence led to the killers, Det. John Zambos told reporters in front of the LAPD's Southeast station on March 8, 2002.

[See Scott, A6]

Why California is the state conservatives love to hate

BY NOAH BIERMAN

For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, residents of the rest of the country often saw California as the place their wacky or adventurous or beautiful cousin went to seek gold, celebrity, sunny beaches, sexual freedom, and maybe a new identity, away from the family and the baggage in St. Paul, Philadelphia or Levittown.

Its current status as a punching bag for the right in a national culture war has taken decades to achieve.

For conservatives, the state's glamorous image became tarnished in the 1960s and 1970s. They blasted Berkeley for its protesters and San Francisco for its hippies and gay life. Eastern elites mocked Los Angeles — at least the parts they saw in the movies — for its shallowness.

Former Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown earned a nickname in his first stint that surprised those who knew him but embodied a sense that the place was sort of kooky: Gov. Moonbeam.

The jabs were sometimes playful, sometimes acid, often overstated. But even if conservatives thought the Bay Area was too far-out, they still had Orange County's megachurches, John

[See California, A8]

Workers' 'right to disconnect'

Proposed bill would give employees the power to ignore calls and messages after work hours. CALIFORNIA, B1

Visa changes may hurt recruiting

Experts say fee hikes could make a difference in some employers' efforts to hire foreign workers. BUSINESS, A9

Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 75/52. B6

For the latest news, go to latimes.com.



STEPH CHAMBERS Getty Images

PERFECTLY IMPERFECT

Caitlin Clark, right, and Iowa walk off the court after losing to South Carolina, which capped off its 38-0 season with a basketball title. SPORTS, D3



Get more of the news you need.

Download the app.

