

Experiencing California's Gold Rush

“Welcome to the wonderful museums of the City of Sacramento! We are excited that you have chosen to explore the heritage of California’s Capital City and some of its arts, wildlife and culture...Sacramento is known as the ‘friendly’ city – a good place to live, work and play...Here you can do much more than simply read about the California Gold Rush: You can actually experience it!” —Heather Fargo, Mayor of Sacramento, City of Sacramento Website

Mayor Heather Fargo’s downtown office sits directly across the street from the newly refurbished Cesar Chavez Plaza Park. The park was redesigned to feature a life-sized statue of Mr. Chavez, the modern-day saint for the rights of the poor and downtrodden. My office is located just one mile north of Mayor Fargo’s, across the street from Friendship Park, a place where 600 or so homeless people gather each day to spend their daylight hours in a safe place.

While Mayor Fargo’s view of Sacramento looks out to the wonderful museums, the arts and the culture of California’s capital city, my view of Sacramento overlooks the modern-day version of the California Gold Rush in the guise of Goldies, a sex store located just the other side of Friendship Park. This goldmine is housed in a small building perched on the last corner of a six-lane, one-way expressway that funnels all automobile traffic into downtown Sacramento. More than 40,000 cars a day, including the Regional Transit light rail trains, pass by the sex store en route to California’s capital city. City planners refer to this expressway as the “Gateway” to Sacramento; I call it North 12th Street.

Don’t let the small size of this goldmine fool you. Goldies packs a big business punch. The store has less than 1,500 square feet of floor space, but grosses more than \$15,000 a day, and because sex never takes a holiday, it is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round; it never closes. In the event of a power failure, the store is equipped with an emergency generator to allow it to continue in full operation; no coitus interruptus permitted in this sex goldmine.

Goldies’ paid advertising is limited to a 2½ x 5 inch display ad in the telephone Yellow Pages under the heading “Video Tapes & Discs – Sales & Rentals.” The top of the ad reads “GOLDIES ADULT SUPERSTORES”

and is positioned side by side with an above-the-breasts head shot of a smiling youngish-looking blonde with black hair roots and lavishly applied jet-black eye liner. A starburst in the ad reads “Rated Sacramento’s Best Adult Store.” The black bullets list the merchandise:

- party gifts, • intimate lingerie, • bachelorette headquarters, • magazines, massage oils & creams, and • best selection of adult toys.

Go ahead, run the numbers: \$105,000 a week, \$450,000 a month, \$5,400,000 annually, or \$3,600 per square foot in annual gross sales. Assuming an average purchase of \$25, more than 18,000 customers shop at Goldies each month. What is the average monthly patronage, do you think, for all of Sacramento’s downtown museums, arts and cultural activities? A fraction of Goldies’, I dare say.

Sex sells, and how! The porn industry in the U.S. totals \$20 billion, three times larger than the combined revenue of ABC, CBS, and NBC, and larger than the combined revenue for all football, baseball, and basketball franchises. Twelve percent – or 4.2 million – of all Websites are porn-related; 8% of all daily emails – or 2.5 billion – are porn-related; and 25% – or 68 million – of all daily search engine requests are porn-related. Besides sex, what on earth is going on?

In and around Goldies, the human frenzy surrounding sex is generally well contained and subdued, except for those periodic live-performance occasions when the store is used as the Sacramento venue for a nationally known porn celebrity starlet who has agreed to lap dance with the store’s customers. Commercial live sex cannot be contained so easily, and during these performances the entire area is swarming with men, while a hundred cars or more cruise the neighborhood for blocks around seeking a parking space. For hours at a time, men stand in line patiently awaiting their personal two-minute sex-simulating lap dance – \$20 for two minutes. How many professionals do you know who are paid \$600 an hour? Nice work if you can get it.

Yes indeed, Goldies is an ore-laden urban goldmine, and every city of size has a least one like it, but in Sacramento we have been blessed with three. Mayor Fargo is quite correct: Sacramento is a friendly city and you can actually experience the California Gold Rush here – it’s located at 201 North 12th St. (AND VISIT OUR MULTI-CHANNEL VIDEO ARCADE).

