

Opinion: California's massage industry explosion

By Joe Mathews

For the record, I did not intend to get naked for this column.

But the woman at the local massage parlor insisted that I remove my pants and underwear before she would put her hands on me. And so I took it all off—in order to better understand today's California.

Judging by our streetscapes, this is a state of massage. It has become nearly impossible to drive a thoroughfare anywhere in California without encountering multiple massage parlors. Since the 2007 arrival of the Great Recession, no retail business sector has grown faster, with hotbeds in San Francisco, San Mateo, Fresno, and Sacramento and Orange counties.

Then there's California's massage capital, the San Gabriel Valley, where I live. The city of San Gabriel has gone from one to 53 massage parlors in a decade, while little old ladies in Pasadena can now choose from more than 100 massage parlors (that's one for every 1,300 residents), up from nine a decade ago, according to the Pasadena Star-News. My own neighbors in South Pasadena also seem to have a lot of stress in need of relief. On a recent walk, I counted 10 parlors within six blocks of our house, with names like Massage Place, Shiatsu of Zen, King Spa, Massage Villa, Gifted Hands Therapeutic Massage, Massage Envy, and Happy Feet Foot Massage.

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