

NEWS

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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4082
dwert@sbcounty.gov

Supervisors invest funding in communities and services

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today approved a plan to invest a portion of accumulated savings into a variety of projects aimed at bettering the county's communities, improving county services, and strengthening public safety.

From a reserve fund standing at \$120.2 million, the Board of Supervisors today directed county staff to return to the Board next week with a proposal to earmark \$31.8 million to expand fire protection, improve roads, add amenities to parks, conduct much-needed repairs to county buildings, and create cultural opportunities.

The proposals include \$1,750,000 to build a County Fire station in Baker to serve residents in the area and respond to incidents on busy Interstate 15. County Fire has no permanent fire station facility in Baker. The apparatus are parked in a trash hauler building, and the personnel are housed in a motel and depend on a prison crew for additional staffing.

County Fire's Baker crew first-in response area is 4,000 square miles of primary public lands. In addition, the Baker crews responded to approximately 950 incidents, primarily traffic accidents, that occur on over a hundred miles of Interstate 15 and State Highway 127. The next closest fire station is in Harvard, 46 miles south of Baker, and the Clark County, Nevada fire station in Jean, 90 miles north on Interstate 15. A BLM seasonal staffed station is located at Hole-in-the-Wall, 80 to 90 miles from Baker.

County Fire has signed a leased/purchase agreement with the Bureau of Land Management for a fire station site in Baker, and has completed the architectural design and engineering for a new 5000 square foot fire station. County Fire allocated \$270,000 of one-time funds for the site acquisition and architectural services. The construction cost estimate for the new station is \$1.75 million.

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Other proposals include:

- \$800,000 for paving and railroad traffic controls for Duncan and Wilson Ranch roads in Phelan
- \$345,000 Sidewalks for areas near schools in Fontana
- \$1 million toward the Hall of Paleontology at the County Museum in Redlands
- \$100,000 to repave the Community/Senior Center Parking Lot in Piñon Hills
- \$1,575,000 to help relocate the Moonridge Zoo in the Big Bear area
- \$400,000 to rehabilitate County Fire Station 40 in Oak Hills
- \$625,000 for five additional Fire Department Brush Patrol Units
- \$1 million to rehabilitate roads within Prado Regional Park in Chino
- \$50,000 to standardize traffic and directional signs in Crestline

San Bernardino County's conservative fiscal policies and the restraint shown by the Board of Supervisors over the past several years have resulted in significant financial reserves. Structured reserves, funds set aside for specific purposes, have grown almost 60 percent in the last three years, from \$76 million to \$120.2 million. These reserves have been critical to the county's ability to deal with state budget cuts without unduly impacting our residents.

In addition to these structured reserves, the county's conservative budgeting practices have also generated one-time reserves of \$93.3 million. When this year's state budget crisis concluded this past summer, the county had only used a portion of those one-time reserves to offset funds taken by the state, and still had \$79 million left that can be allocated to support various one-time needs.

The Board's action today will put \$31.8 million of those reserves to work addressing 90 capital projects that will improve public safety, county facilities, parks, and address a variety of community needs.