

What do Gov. Gavin Newsom's budget cuts mean to the Inland Empire?

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Hundreds of millions in cuts to homelessness programs. A pause in billions for subsidized child care. And \$300 million in annual reductions to public health funding.

Those are just a handful of the proposed budget cuts across 260 state programs in [California Gov. Gavin Newsom's latest \\$288 billion budget proposal](#), commonly referred to as the "May Revise," which he announced May 10 as part of a plan to close a projected deficit.

But what do those numbers mean for Inland Empire programs that rely on state funding? Here are several ways the governor's proposed budget cuts could affect the region.

Transportation

While transportation agencies dodged direct cuts in the revised budget, [the \\$17.3 billion in cuts Newsom and legislative leaders agreed to in April](#) delayed \$1 billion in grant funding for transit and intercity rail projects.

That freeze held up \$138 million ticketed for the [Riverside County Transportation Commission](#), Aaron Hake, the commission's executive director, said via email. Among other priorities, that money would have helped public transit companies shift to zero-emission vehicles.

“The freeze leaves funds vulnerable to potential cuts, local projects stalled, and uncertainty in future project funding,” Hake said. The May Revise also would cut funding for projects helping pedestrians and bicyclists and separate rail crossings from roads so cars don’t have to wait for trains to cross, he said.

Any funding cuts “result in more challenges in meeting the needs of our residents and commuters,” Tim Watkins, chief of legislative and public affairs for the [San Bernardino County Transportation Authority](#), said via email.

“Currently, the transportation dollars, looking through our lens, appear to be only frozen rather than cut or redirected, so we remain optimistic until final outcomes are enacted.”

Social Services

A range of social services overseen by Riverside and San Bernardino counties would face cuts under the May Revise.

Cuts to CalWORKs, the state’s welfare program, could make it harder for the county to determine if people are eligible for benefits, San Bernardino County spokesperson David Wert said via email.

Other cuts would slash \$6.8 million from housing programs, which “would result in the reduction of supportive services for children and families that are experiencing homelessness,” Wert said.

A proposed \$11 million cut to the Future of Public Health program would take away money that could hire more public health workers, while a \$6 million cut to child welfare services “would result in the reduction of administrative support and supportive services for children and families in need,” Wert said.

The May Revise cuts “have the potential for a significant impact on Riverside County’s ability to provide essential social services,” County Executive Officer Jeff Van Wagenen said via email.

Those services, according to Van Wagenen, include food stamps, emergency child care services, a program to build affordable housing, Medi-Cal — California's health insurance program for the poor — adult protective services and In-Home Supportive Services, a program providing in-home care to elderly and disabled indigent adults.

Crime Victims

The May Revisé cuts “pose a dire threat to our services for victims of crime,” Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin, a Republican who has criticized the Democratic governor before, said in an emailed statement.

Hestrin said his office could lose \$2 million in “vital crime victim assistance grants serving child victims and human trafficking victims ... The additional loss of Victims of Crime Act funding creates significant concern ... potentially depriving more than 6,000 victims of essential services.”

The cuts “not only neglect victims' rights but also disregard the economic and societal costs, including job loss, program destabilization, and increased strain on already burdened systems,” Melissa Donaldson, director of victim services in Hestrin's office, said in the emailed statement.

“It's imperative that we prioritize funding for victim services to prevent further harm to those already suffering. The priorities of a government are measured by where they direct their funding and, clearly, crime victims are not a priority for this administration.”

Colton Joint Unified sues San Bernardino County again over Bloomington industrial project

'They've become very proactive in protecting their turf,' a Bloomington official said of the school district

A truck passes by a warehouse on Slover Ave. in Bloomington on Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

By **JOE NELSON** | jnelson@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun
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The Colton Joint Unified School District is suing San Bernardino County for allegedly circumventing state environmental laws and not properly addressing its concerns over potentially adverse impacts when it approved a 260,000-square-foot warehouse in Bloomington.

The school district voiced its opposition to the project in letters to the county Planning Commission in September 2023 and then the Board of Supervisors in January, but the county approved it anyway, according to the lawsuit, filed on Feb. 21 in San Bernardino Superior Court.

Attorneys on both sides are scheduled to meet at the San Bernardino County Government Center on Thursday, May 23, for a settlement conference, court records show.

A person walks near a home adjacent to a warehouse in Bloomington on Thursday, March 31. (File photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

The lawsuit marks the second time in the last four years the school district has sued the county over burgeoning industrial development in Bloomington, making it somewhat of an environmental steward in its efforts to guard against potential threats to the health and safety of its students and their families.

“It is interesting that they’ve become very proactive in protecting their turf. I think they’re setting an example for the whole state,” said Gary Grossich, vice chair of the Bloomington Municipal Advisory Committee. “It’s kind of unheard of that a school district is doing what they’re doing. They’re very proactive.”

Warehouse project

The 260,000-square-foot warehouse will be built by Indianapolis-based Duke Realty Alder LP on more than 13 acres on the southeast corner of Slover and Alder avenues. It will be a Prologis operation and include a loading dock with 38 dock doors and 131 parking stalls, and will be in operation seven days a week, according to a Planning Commission staff report.

In its lawsuit, the district alleges, among other things, that the project's environmental impact report omitted adequate assessments of health risks from diesel emissions and air quality as well as a traffic impact study.

The warehouse will be located approximately 340 feet north of Bloomington High School and within a mile of five other district schools, according to the lawsuit.

"We have important concerns about the Duke/Prologis warehouse project and its proximity to Bloomington High School," said school district spokesperson Katie Orloff in an email on Friday, May 17. "While we feel that the mitigation measures included are inadequate to address the project's cumulative impacts of noise, traffic, pedestrian safety and air quality on and around campus, we hope that moving forward we can work with the county and developer to provide a greater level of safety for our students and staff."

Insufficient mitigation

The county, according to the lawsuit, took steps to address the concerns of the district and community members following discussions in 2022, including having a new traffic signal installed at the intersection of Slover and Alder avenues. An updated air quality analysis, safety study and traffic analysis also were conducted, according to the lawsuit.

However, the county did not draft a new environmental impact report reflecting those changes and recirculate it for further review and comment. Instead, the county approved the project, a potential violation of the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, according to the lawsuit.

The district is asking the court to set aside the board's approval of the project until it has prepared a "legally sufficient CEQA document."

Board approval

Mark Wardlaw, the county's land use services director, said during the Jan. 23 Board of Supervisors meeting, when the board approved the project, that officials with Duke Realty offered to pay the school district \$50,000, fund gymnasium improvements at Bloomington High School and offer a scholarship through the school's Business Pathways Program, as well as provide air filters to the school. The school district, however, rejected the offers.

Duke Realty continued extending the \$50,000 offer to the district, to no avail, Wardlaw said.

"The proposal was declined ... at each step," Wardlaw said.

The warehouse will exceed county sustainability requirements by having solar photovoltaic systems equal to the building's projected energy needs, and is committed to having zero-emission trucks in 2030 if they are commercially available, environmental planner Brooke Blandino said in a Dec. 20, 2023, letter to county planning manager Aron Liang.

Blandino also noted that the proposed warehouse would utilize zero-emission forklifts and yard trucks, and that charging ports for electric vehicles and trucks will be installed at all loading dock doors.

The board approved the project on a 4-1 vote. Fifth District Supervisor Joe Baca Jr., the lone dissenting vote, said he understood private property rights and that the area where the project is proposed is zoned for industrial use, but he had other concerns.

"In my opinion, it just doesn't make sense, just because of the proximity to Bloomington High School," Baca said. He said he also had concerns that some of the school district's issues were not addressed.

"At this point in time, I can't support this project. I just don't think it's a good fit for Bloomington as this time," Baca said.

Grossich said he does not oppose the project.

"Personally, I have no problem with the project. Slover Avenue is a well-known industrial corridor," Grossich said. "There's warehouse activity up and down the corridor."

Bloomington has 4 million square feet of existing warehouse space and 5.2 million square feet of approved warehouse space through 2025, according to [Warehouse City](#), an online data tool of the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability at Pitzer College, which lists warehouse data and pending warehouse projects in the Inland Empire.

Bloomington Commercial Center

In recent years, Colton Joint Unified has battled it out in court with the county and the city of Fontana on other development projects due to environmental concerns.

In May 2021, the [district sued the county](#) over its approval of the Bloomington Commercial Center projects, on the southeast corner of Cedar Avenue and Santa Ana Avenue. The project included fuel pumps for trucks, a truck scale, above-ground diesel fuel tanks and parking spaces for trucks, but no environmental impact report. It was located near a 28-acre swath of land the district owns and where it plans to build a middle school, and also within a quarter of a mile of two elementary schools.

Five months later, in October 2021, the [district settled the lawsuit](#) with the county after the developer agreed to scale down the project by, among other things, eliminating the above-ground fuel tanks and a planned dog park at the center, reducing the number of truck parking stalls, modifying the configuration of the project, and compensating the district \$175,000 for attorney fees and the loss of 24,000 square feet of its property.

West Valley Logistics Center

In September 2022, Colton Joint Unified sued the city of Fontana over the [West Valley Logistics Center](#) project, lodging similar allegations to what it is now making against the county.

The city and project developer were [sued in March 2019](#) by the county of San Bernardino and several environmental groups, alleging the proposed 3.4-million-square-foot complex violated state environmental laws and that it would harm critical habitat.

In May 2020, the developer settled the lawsuit for \$20 million and agreed to modify the project, which the city agreed to. But the city failed to have a new environmental impact report done to reflect those modifications, the school district alleged in its lawsuit.

In February 2023, Colton Joint Unified accepted a \$1.07 million settlement from developer IDI Logistics in the West Valley Logistics Center litigation. Another \$230,000 in mitigation fees were accepted for the Agua Mansa Logistics Center in Colton, giving the district a combined \$1.3 million from the two settlements.

"Logistics projects send a significant amount of diesel truck traffic through our district neighborhoods and near our schools, creating pollution, noise and safety concerns for students walking to and from school," Orloff said. "The funds from this settlement will be an important resource to help mitigate the impacts of these two projects on our students and staff and keep our campuses safer."



Morongo Basin programs expected to receive funding at County BOS meeting (5/21)

Mike Lipsitz

May 20, 2024

Among the many agenda items to be considered at tomorrow's (May 21, 2024) 10 o'clock meeting of county supervisors in San Bernardino, a handful of programs in our Morongo Basin will receive funding.

Reach Out Morongo Basin will get a \$250,000 increase in their contact amount for a total of \$635,000.

The Morongo Unified School District will receive \$34,000 to pay for a full-time school-based Probation Officer for one year starting July.

The Morongo Basin Sheriff Station is among six that will receive approval to apply for an Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Grant for \$800,000 for off-road law enforcement.

And finally, County Service Area 70 F Morongo Valley is expected to receive approval for plans and specs and to advertise for bids for a Water Tank Replacement Project. More details on these items and information on how you can participate in tomorrow's meeting [can be found on the board of supervisors' agenda.](#)

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/business/manufacturing-remains-a-powerful-economic-driver-in-inland-empire/article_ef1b8d74-152e-11ef-972c-1f24dff64c18.html

Manufacturing remains a powerful economic driver in Inland Empire

May 18, 2024

Manufacturing remains a powerful economic driver in the Inland Empire, as seen in this photo at the InTech Center in Fontana.

The economy of San Bernardino County and the Inland Empire (IE) was built, to a large extent, on the strength of its manufacturing sector.

At its peak in the early 1970s, Kaiser Steel in Fontana employed more than 13,000 workers with high-quality jobs that drove economic prosperity across entire communities.

Today, manufacturing remains a powerful economic driver, accounting for more than 50,000 good jobs in San Bernardino County while fortifying the IE's role as a hub for global commerce, according to a news release issued by the county's Workforce Development Board (WDB).

According to projections by the California Employment Development Department, manufacturers in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are expected to add 9,500 jobs during the current decade, a 10 percent increase.

In addition, research compiled for the WDB by Lightcast indicates strong growth ahead for several manufacturing sub-sectors, including computer and electronic products, transportation equipment, and food and beverage products.

To help meet this demand, WDB is working with companies and organizations across the county to develop model training programs. Notable among these is the nationally renowned InTech Center, on the site of what once was Kaiser Steel.

To learn more about the direct services and resources that WDB provides for local job seekers and businesses, visit <https://workforce.sbcounty.gov/>

• Opinion Columnist

Southern California unemployment dips to 4.3% as 23,000 jobs created in April

By **JONATHAN LANSNER** | jlansner@scng.com | Orange County Register
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Southern California's unemployment rate hit an 11-month low in April.

My trusty spreadsheet, [filled with state job figures for the month](#), found Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties had a 4.3% unemployment rate compared with 4.8% in the previous month. It's likely a seasonal dip, as the rate decreased by 0.3 percentage points in April in the pre-pandemic 2015-19 period.

Consider that April's rate was the lowest since May 2023, but it's still higher than the 3.9% joblessness seen in April 2023. Unemployment for the region averaged 4.7% in 2015-19.

The four-county tally of unemployed workers was 386,000 – down 50,700 in a month but up 36,600 in a year. The jobless count is 9% above the 424,700 average in pre-pandemic 2015-19.

Increased employment helped to lower regional joblessness.

Local bosses had 7.97 million at work in April – up 23,000 in a month, and up 74,600 in 12 months. Local hiring averaged 22,600 in April in 2015-19. March 2024 saw 23,100 employees added.

The past year's job growth of 0.9% topped the previous 12 months' 0.6% increase, but it's slower than the 2.2% hiring pace throughout 2015-19.

Industry swings

Job changes in key Southern California business sectors, ranked by one-month change ...

Health/social services: 1,321,400 workers – up 6,600 in a month and up 67,400 in a year.

Restaurants: 694,500 workers – up 6,000 in a month and up 7,600 in a year.

Government: 1,040,100 workers – up 5,200 in a month and up 28,500 in a year.

Hotels/entertainment/recreation: 264,300 workers – up 2,800 in a month and up 2,500 in a year.

Private education: 218,700 workers – up 2,500 in a month and up 14,200 in a year.

Personal services: 267,500 workers – up 1,800 in a month and up 6,800 in a year.

Logistics/utilities: 799,800 workers – up 1,000 in a month but down 2,600 in a year.

Financial: 356,000 workers – up 900 in a month but down 4,200 in a year.

Information: 219,900 workers – up 700 in a month but down 16,200 in a year.

Retailing: 725,100 workers – up 100 in a month but down 1,400 in a year.

Manufacturing: 565,000 workers – down 1,200 in a month and down 9,800 in a year.

Professional-business services: 1,123,300 workers – down 1,400 in a month and down 19,600 in a year.

Regional differences

Here's how the job market performed in the region's key metropolitan areas ...

Los Angeles County: 4.58 million workers, after adding 18,100 in a month and growing by 32,600 in a year. Hiring averaged 8,900 for the month in 2015-19. Unemployment? 4.5% vs. 5.2% a month earlier; 4.7% a year ago; and 5.2% average in 2015-19.

Orange County: 1.7 million workers, after adding 2,400 in a month and growing by 21,000 in a year. Hiring averaged 6,920 for the month in 2015-19. Unemployment? 3.7% vs. 3.9% a month earlier; 3.1% a year ago; and 3.6% average in 2015-19.

Inland Empire: 1.69 million workers, after adding 2,500 in a month and growing by 21,000 in a year. Hiring averaged 6,820 for the month in 2015-19. Unemployment? 4.8% vs. 5.1% a month earlier; 4.1% a year ago; and 5.2% average in 2015-19.

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Column: News business needs help in California. Is government the answer?

Ink specialist David Oma works at the Los Angeles Times Olympic printing plant in February. The plant has since closed.
(Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

By George Skelton
Capitol Journal Columnist

May 20, 2024 3 AM PT

SACRAMENTO — Newspapers are dying. That's old news. What's new is that in California, they may get some state government life support.

There's state legislation brewing that would force the largest internet platforms — [like Google](#) — to kick in money to help save journalism. [These platforms are the principal villains](#), after all, in the downfall of so many news outlets.

It's not only newspapers that are in perilous decline. It's much of news reporting — for print, broadcast and even digital.

In financial jeopardy is the profession of gathering factual information that citizens need in order to hold their elected representatives and governments accountable — in Washington, Sacramento and every city and little town.

Robust journalism is the essential component of a healthy democracy. Weak journalism leads to a sick democracy.

Here's a stark example of what's happening today as misinformation fills the communications void left by the weakening of factual journalism:

Millions of Americans actually believe Donald Trump's lies that the [2020 election was stolen from him](#). There is no credible evidence for that poor-loser fabrication. But Trump followers ignore declining objective news outlets and reaffirm their beliefs in echo chambers such as Fox News.

Most government and political writers, by nature, are driven by the desire to cut through the bull and provide the public with straight facts written in an understandable way. If there's an agenda, it's not ideological. It's to get on the front page or the top of the website.

[But news reporting is a declining profession](#) because, traditionally, it has been funded mostly by advertising. That's collapsing because of the internet.

Basically, the big internet platforms gobble up news outlets' products and work without paying for it and build their own ad programs around the heisted articles. Or they just rip off the info and create their own posts. This is the scary future with AI.

Newspaper advertising has dried up. And increasingly because of the platforms' actions, the revenue isn't being replaced by internet ads.

Also, when you tap into Google to buy a pair of shoes online, your data are collected by the platform and sold to other shoe companies. Soon you're being inundated online with shoe ads. And the shoe outfits see no reason to place ads in a newspaper or on local TV.

Advertising money to pay reporters' salaries has been hemorrhaging for years. Roughly two-thirds of California journalists have lost their jobs in the last two decades. [More than 100 Times newsroom staffers were laid off in January.](#)

To their credit, some legislators are attempting to stand up to the powerful platforms and toss a lifeline to media outlets.

Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland) is pushing a bill, AB 886, similar to laws enacted in Australia and Canada. It would require large platforms to pay news outlets for their products. Fees would be set by arbitration. News outfits would be required to spend at least 70% of the money on reporters.

The bill passed the Assembly last year but hasn't moved in the Senate.

Key lawmakers have agreed to pass something this summer, but haven't decided what. They're trying to weave together legislation that would attain a difficult two-thirds legislative vote, be acceptable to the big platforms and gain Gov. Gavin Newsom's signature. The governor has been mum.

The quartet are Wicks, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Tom Umberg (D-Orange), new Senate Majority Leader Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) and Sen. Steve Glazer (D-Orinda), the author of a second journalism rescue bill.

"We've experienced the hollowing out of newsrooms in epic proportions and that has significantly eroded oversight of government," says Glazer, a former political press secretary.

I asked the veteran pol whether he'd noticed a decline in state Capitol coverage.

"Absolutely," he replied. "There are great reporters. But the volume of actions taking place in the Capitol that get no scrutiny is extraordinary."

In the last two decades, the size of the Capitol press corps has shrunk — and at the Times bureau — by two-thirds.

Glazer's bill, SB 1327, would impose a "data extraction mitigation fee" — a sales tax — on platforms that reap more than \$2.5 billion annually from advertising to Californians. It would snag Google, Amazon and Meta and generate \$1 billion annually.

Forty percent would go to schools — a move that helps build political support for the bill.

Half — \$500 million — would provide tax credits for reporters' salaries. The credits would range from 30% of salaries for full-time news employees at The Times and other medium-to-large papers, and up to 55% for new hires at tiny papers with a maximum of five staffers.

I called the publisher of the small Ojai Valley News, a printed weekly that has two full-time reporters and four half-time staffers.

“Something is really needed to rescue independent newspapers,” says publisher Laura Rearwin Ward. “If it’s done right, it could provide better wages for reporters. I don’t see why reporters should live in poverty. This business can’t afford to pay them a fair wage. They’re doing it for love.”

I also called the head honcho at the other end of the newspaper spectrum: Chris Argentieri, president and chief operating officer at the L.A. Times, which has a news staff of around 400.

“We produce a lot of very important intellectual property that goes around the world,” Argentieri told me. “It makes no sense that a company can take our product and not compensate us for it.”

He added that news organizations aren’t big enough to deal with the powerful platforms, and the platforms won’t negotiate. “Government is the only entity that can take on Google,” he says.

I asked him about the future of newspapers. His formula: A good product people will buy, digital subscriptions, philanthropic help and public sector support.

The two bills pending in the Legislature will probably — hopefully — be merged in some fashion.

Unless government confronts the modern-day robber barons, it could be “-30-” for much of legitimate news reporting. That’s the old news copy sign for “the end.”

3.5 million acres of Mojave Desert where military trains designated state's first Sentinel Landscape

Millions of acres in the Mojave Desert have been designated as a Sentinel Landscape, meaning more will be done to balance military training with protecting listed plants and animals such as the desert tortoise. AP Photo/Douglas C. Pizac, File)

By **ERIKA I. RITCHIE** | eritchie@scng.com | Orange County Register
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Millions of acres of the Mojave Desert, home to five military bases and at least 40 protected species, including the desert tortoise and Joshua trees, will have more protection thanks to a designation as California's first Sentinel Landscape.

The 3.5 million acres located north of Los Angeles and the Inland Empire received the distinction this week in an announcement from the Sentinel Landscape Partnership, a collaboration between the departments of Defense, Agriculture and Interior that was formed in 2013. The area includes multi-use public lands, farmlands, recreational lands and military training areas and lies in the desert between Ridgecrest and the Morongo Basin.

The new designation is a "force-multiplier" for Marine Air Ground Combat Center 29 Palms and the other Mojave Desert military installations supporting conservation efforts in range resilience and sustainability, Marine officials said.

Other bases in the Mojave Desert include the National Training Center Fort Irwin, Edwards Air Force Base, Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake and Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow.

"As an example, it amplifies the combat center's commitment to the tortoise (repopulation), habitat restoration and other recovery efforts on and off the installation," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brandon Owen, a 29 Palms base spokesperson.

The tortoise population has declined 50% to 90% in the Mojave Desert due to a wide range of threats, including ravens, coyotes, habitation degradation, disease, being run over by vehicles and invasive plants.

A major component of the base's program to restore the tortoise population is to have pregnant females brought in to nest in captivity so the babies hatch in a protected environment. This allows them to grow larger with predator-resistant shells before being released into the wilderness as juveniles. The base has released more than 100 babies into the wild in the last few years.

Base ecologists at 29 Palms said the tortoise program has resulted in a 96% survival rate of turtles inside the facility each year. In the wild, the survival rate is less than 50%, base officials said.

The tortoises are tagged and tracked over several years to monitor their growth, movements and survival rates. The research shows scientists which methods work best for raising baby tortoises, and this information benefits other installations, too, Marine officials said.

The new designation encourages the involved federal agencies to work more closely together and remove bureaucratic roadblocks, helping to bring together coalitions that include multiple nonprofits in the area and federal, state, county and local organizations who can now work together more easily in restoring habitat and ecosystem function by creating species corridors and improving soil health, and managing watersheds to build resilience to a warmer, more arid climate.

Some of the groups will include California State Parks, Death Valley National Park, Desert Tortoise Council, Joshua Tree National Park and the University of California Riverside.

In addition to better collaboration it also prevents development around military installations with the aim of protecting those areas, but not interfering with training. The federal designation lets local government agencies and nonprofits pay farmers to keep farms and wildlife habitats as they presently are.

“The program provides DOD with the unique opportunity to expand and diversify our partnerships to enhance the resilience of military installations and the local communities that support them,” Brendan Owens, assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations, and environment, said in a statement. “This year, the department is excited to support the five newly designated landscapes in achieving their dual priorities of safeguarding national defense and enhancing installation and community resilience, particularly in the Pacific and Western regions.”

There are now 17 Sentinel Landscapes, the other newly designated areas are in Hawaii, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Utah.

Among the goals centered around the new designation in the desert are reducing vehicle strikes that kill threatened, endangered, or sensitive species and reclaiming and protecting 50,000 acres of priority habitats through restoration, officials said.

The groups will also work through community outreach to promote conservation through education, including preventing illegal off-highway vehicle use and illegal cannabis growth. There will also be efforts to work with growing cooperatives to develop climate-resilient seeds.

Homelessness was down during pandemic, so how do Orange County communities replicate that?

The Tahiti Motel in Stanton, CA, seen here in 2021 has been converted to permanent supportive housing through the state-funded Project Homekey. (File photo by Paul Bersebach, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **DESTINY TORRES** | dtorres@scng.com

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When Orange County's recent point in time count of people living on the streets and in shelters [came back higher than in 2022](#), officials said the loss of pandemic-era protections such as rental assistance and the eviction moratorium contributed to the return to numbers closer to those seen in 2019.

When those emergency resources and protections went away, folks became more vulnerable again to falling into homelessness, they said.

But having seen their benefits, some cities in Orange County have begun making permanent some of their own safety nets to supplement the loss of these resources, such as enhancing eviction protections or capping rent increases. And more money is being spent on creating longer-term housing to get people out of the cycle of going in and out of shelters.

The number of homeless people in Orange County rose by 28% in the last two years, according to the latest point in time count results released May 8 by county officials. The county reported 7,322 people approached during the January count said they were experiencing homelessness, and nearly half reported that they were experiencing homelessness for the first time in the past year.

But the increase from pre-pandemic 2019 was just about 7%.

Costa Mesa in November passed a new law that enhances protections for renters in no-fault evictions, the type that can happen when an apartment owner wants to renovate their unit. Under the law, landlords must notify the city when they serve an eviction notice. It also requires that renters forced out of their apartments for a no-fault eviction be provided relocation assistance equal to one month of fair market rent based on the size of the apartment.

Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens said the point of the law is to keep people housed and without it there would be a higher likelihood of illegal no-fault evictions in the city. At a City Council meeting earlier this month, city staff said there's been a 50% reduction in eviction notices since the ordinance was passed.

The city has outreach workers who offer support to households that are being evicted to get alternative housing.

Effective since November, the Santa Ana City Council adopted rent stabilization in 2021 which caps rent increases at 3% annually or 80% of inflation, whichever is less. The council also approved a "just cause" eviction ordinance that limits in which circumstances landlords can evict tenants.

"Renter protections in our community are critical because they prevent people from being pushed out of an apartment," Councilmember Jessie Lopez said, adding that it isn't the only solution. "Cities must build affordable housing. We have many market-rate apartments in the city that are nearly \$3,000 a month."

Councilmember Benjamin Vazquez said he thinks these guardrails most likely kept people from becoming homeless, however, they are not a sustainable way to solve the homelessness crisis.

"We're going to need homeownership and housing for people beyond whatever we have right now," Vazquez said. "There are a lot more families living in motels, in garages, renting out rooms. We're already so densely populated that those numbers that we counted are much higher if you account for the housing insecurity of families not only doubling up, but tripling, quadrupling up."

In Santa Ana, the number of those unhoused increased in the last two years, according to the latest count results, but Judson Brown, Santa Ana's housing division manager, said those experiencing homelessness in the last five years has declined by 19%. The largest issue across the county, Brown said, is the lack of permanent supportive housing specifically for folks who are unhoused.

"There is absolutely a supply issue. We need more housing, more affordable housing overall," Brown said. "But, you can't just build all the new housing, new private market housing, rental housing, affordable housing in the world. You actually have to restrict and designate the units for people experiencing homelessness."

That distinction is important, Brown said, because general affordable housing attracts thousands of low-income applicants, most of whom end up on waitlists. Permanent supportive housing also provides wraparound services designed to meet the needs of a formerly unhoused person to keep them housed.

"When people hear that an affordable housing project is being developed in your community, ask yourself, 'Who is that affordable housing project being developed for? Is it for your neighbor who is experiencing homelessness? Or is it general affordable housing? We absolutely need both,'" Brown said. "But relative to addressing the homelessness crisis in our communities, we need units designated specifically for people experiencing homelessness. That's how we see results."

Fifth District Supervisor Katrina Foley has described a bottleneck problem when it comes to housing in Orange County.

"We have created this elaborate system of care for shelter, for recuperative care. We have case managers, we have outreach workers, and they're literally getting out and talking to any person who is experiencing homelessness. They're getting them into the shelters," Foley said. "But what happens once they get there? You can't live permanently in a shelter. It's there as a temporary stopgap to help you to find a plan for permanent housing, but there is no permanent housing, there's no place to go."

The point in time count report found that 72% of the people living in the county-run Yale Navigation Center and Bridges at Kraemer Place were eligible for housing, but only one out of 12 were actually connected to any.

“We have so many providers that are helping us work with each individual. Engaging and helping them get all the things they need to move into a place, but we literally do not have places to move them into,” Doug Becht, director of the county’s Office of Care Coordination, said. “There are resources and we’re trying to build on them. The challenge is that people are falling into homelessness faster than the resources we’re bringing on board.”

Julia Bidwell, director of OC Housing & Community Development, said the county is focused on the regional housing funding strategy adopted in 2018 in which the goal is to build 2,396 permanent supportive housing units by 2029. Between January 2022 and May 2024, 859 housing units, both supportive and affordable, were completed, four of which were Project Homekey sites. One roadblock, Bidwell said, is funding.

“We already have an identified gap in that housing funding strategy of about \$900 million. We’re looking for resources,” Bidwell said. “Obviously with COVID, we saw that increase in resources, and now we see what happens with a decrease.”

Permanent supportive housing sites have opened up [throughout the county](#) over the last few years as part of the state’s [Homekey program](#). Stanton on May 29 will open three new Homekey communities that were converted motels, all near or on Beach Boulevard. Combined, they’ll have 153 affordable apartments with 20 units dedicated to military veterans experiencing homelessness.

“It’s gonna be a success,” said Stanton Mayor David Shawver. “We are so proud that we are able to get three of them in our city.”

Stanton was able to house homeless people during the pandemic at motels with Project Roomkey, Shawver said.

Costa Mesa is home to another Project Homekey transformation in Orange County, with a Motel 6 turning into 88 units of permanent supportive housing.

Anaheim Councilmember Natalie Rubalcava highlighted the importance of getting people who are newly homeless connected to services to prevent their situation from getting worse.

“Those are the people that we need to make sure we can capture right away and help prevent long-term homelessness,” Rubalcava said. “The longer they are out of the street, the harder it is for them to transition back into housing.”

Lilly Simmering, deputy CEO at the County of Orange, said the county will be placing a lot more focus on housing and homelessness prevention, pointing to two homeless prevention programs brought forward by county supervisors [Vicente Sarmiento](#) and [Doug Chaffee](#).

“We don’t have any land use authority. We don’t have any specific funding source that is meant for housing, so it will be a very interesting conversation. Housing is very much controlled by the private sector and the developers, so we are going to be trying to wrap our heads around what our role is,” Simmering said. “The county has spent a lot of time looking at prevention programs in terms of services and treatment. I think that we are going to be looking at ways to enhance those areas.”

Staff Writer Michael Slaten contributed to this report.

What's new: 110 'stacked' condo flats begin construction in Ontario

Amenities will feature a pool and spa, outdoor barbecues, patio areas and outdoor dining.



A new community of stacked condominiums is under construction in Ontario. When fully built-out, Radius at Piemonte will have 110 condo units or “stacked flats.” (Image courtesy of Taylor Morrison)

By **SAMANTHA GOWEN** | sgowen@scng.com | Orange County Register
PUBLISHED: May 20, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. | UPDATED: May 20, 2024 at 9:21 a.m.

A new community of stacked condominiums is under construction in Ontario.

When fully built-out, Radius at Piemonte will have 110 condo units or “stacked flats,” according to homebuilder Taylor Morrison.

Both construction and sales have started for the community at the intersection of Ontario Center and Via Piemonte. The homes will cost from \$460,000 to \$591,000 for 650 to 1,559 square feet with one to three bedrooms, one or two baths, and one and two-car garages.

“We are thrilled to grow our footprint in the Ontario market with a fresh, innovative take on multifamily living,” said Taylor Morrison Southern California Division President Lisa Fjelstad.

The stacked flats will come in five floor plans. Each flat will include a private balcony and open-concept living areas.

Amenities include a pool and spa, outdoor barbecues, patio areas and outdoor dining.

Taylor Morrison said that, unlike typical condominiums, owners each will have a private garage stall that opens directly into the building, with only 11 units per building and 5 units per floor.

Models can be toured daily in-person or online with a virtual at [taylormorrison.com/ca/southern-california](https://www.taylormorrison.com/ca/southern-california).

The sprawling Silverado Apartment Homes in Murrieta has traded hands, selling for \$146.5 million to Bell Partners. The 492-unit complex is being renamed Bell Murrieta Springs. (Photo courtesy of Bell Partners)

Silverado apartment complex in Murrieta sells for \$147M

The sprawling Silverado Apartment Homes in Murrieta has traded hands, selling for \$146.5 million to Bell Partners, an investment and apartment management company.

The 492-unit complex is being renamed Bell Murrieta Springs.

“Despite challenging market conditions, I am proud of our team for sourcing an exceptional opportunity to meet our investment objectives”, said Nickolay Bochilo, chief investment officer at Bell Partners, in a statement.

Lili Dunn, president and CEO of the Greensboro-N.C.-based firm, said the company will launch capital improvements to help it “achieve performance objectives.”

The seller was Realty Center Management Inc. in Culver City.

The community was built in 2007, near the intersection of the 15 and 215 freeways. It includes one, two- and three-bedroom floor plans with an average unit size of 948 square feet. Rents at Bell Murrieta Springs range from \$1,988 for a one-bedroom unit to \$2,248-\$2,307 for two bedrooms and \$2,529 for three bedrooms.

Amenities include a walking trail, two pools and a clubhouse.

Bell Partners owns and/or manages 11 apartment communities in Southern California with at least 3,100 apartments.

New postmaster for Riverside post offices

The Riverside Post Office has a new postmaster, a Rialto native and 26-year US Postal Service employee.

Frank Lemos Jr. is the new postmaster for Riverside's post offices and services, He replaces Tanya Toedt-Fitzharris, who recently was named postmaster in San Diego. (Photo courtesy of the USPS)

Frank Lemos Jr. replaces Tanya Toedt-Fitzharris, who recently was named postmaster in San Diego.

Lemos Jr. is now in charge of 421 employees and retail services at four postal facilities within Riverside city limits (Riverside Main, Riverside Downtown, Arlington and Hardman). He's also responsible for seeing that the mail daily distribution goes smoothly across 215 delivery routes in the city.

Before his promotion, he most recently served as a manager of post office operations for the USPS San Diego district office.

Lemos, a Yucaipa resident, said his goals include streamlining postal operations, improving delivery efficiency, enhancing customer service and "fostering a positive relationship within the community."

\$1 million will help update Glen Helen park playground

Glen Helen Regional Park's playground is getting a \$1 million grant from the federal government to improve the facility, according to Rep. Pete Aguilar's office.

The money is going toward updating equipment safety, improving structural integrity and adding a picnic shelter at the playground in San Bernardino.

"The \$1 million in support for shade structures, ADA improvements, and playground resurfacing at Glen Helen will significantly enhance San Bernardino County's ongoing efforts to make this park a destination where our families can come together to relax, play, and create lasting memories," said county Supervisor Joe Baca Jr., whose Fifth District includes Glen Helen Regional Park.

California bill to scrutinize new electric charge dies in Assembly committee

Electric transmission lines in Palmdale. (Gary Coronado/Los Angeles Times)



By Melody Petersen

Staff Writer | [Follow](#)

May 16, 2024 4:50 PM PT

The Assembly Appropriations Committee on Thursday killed a highly watched bill that would have required legislators to study and review a controversial new electric charge recently approved by the Newsom administration.

The committee members didn't discuss their concerns about the bill known as AB 1999 or why they decided to stop the bill from proceeding.

In a roll call, two Democratic committee members — Timothy Grayson of Concord and Gail Pellerin of Santa Cruz — voted for the bill. The rest of the 15-member committee withheld their votes.

Some legislators said this week that they had received more calls from constituents about the new \$24.15 a month electric charge and AB 1999 than any other subject.

The state Public Utilities Commission, which is led by Newsom appointees, [approved the charge](#) last week. In return for paying the new fee, consumers will get a lower rate for each kilowatt hour of power they use.

The Newsom administration says the new billing structure is needed to encourage more people to buy electric cars and replace gas appliances in their homes, which would reduce the use of planet-warming fossil fuels.

With California's electric rates already second highest in the nation, the new fee has angered people across the state.

A coalition of more than 250 consumer and other groups has been protesting against the new monthly charge, saying that millions of Californians who live in apartments or

small homes that use little electricity will see their bills increase to subsidize those using far more power.

They point to a study that found that 3.9 million households will pay \$65 to \$225 more a year under the new billing structure.

People who have solar panels on their homes will also be subject to the monthly charge.

The new fee affects customers of investor-owned power companies, including Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric. It does not apply to customers of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power or other municipal utilities.

The utilities commission says the electric companies will not receive additional revenues under the change. The amount the companies collect from the monthly charge, the commission said, will be equal to what they lose from charging a lower rate for each kilowatt hour.

But critics point out that Newsom's 2022 bill to begin the process of imposing the new monthly charge eliminated a \$10 cap on such fees that had been in place since 2013. That 2022 bill was passed in a [matter of days with almost no debate](#).

In January, Jacqui Irwin, a Thousand Oaks Democrat, introduced AB 1999 to undo much of Newsom's 2022 bill.

The bill faced a rocky path. Last month, Assembly leaders stopped the legislation before it had even received a hearing.

Irwin then amended the bill in an attempt to revive it. The bill [passed its first committee hearing](#) on Wednesday.

The amended bill would have required a study in 2028 of customers' bills to determine who was paying more or less under the new rate structure. The bill said the monthly fee could be repealed if the legislature found it was not working as the utilities commission intended.

Irwin's bill would have also kept the utilities from raising the fixed charge by more than inflation.

Animal intake at San Bernardino shelter could double to 12,000 in the next year

A husky asks for attention as he waits to be adopted at the San Bernardino Animal Shelter in San Bernardino on Thursday, May 2, 2024. The shelter received \$4 million from the city for temporary shelter improvements as the city looks to take over shelter services for Colton, Fontana, and Rialto in July. The shelter will use the money to install temporary facilities to house the increased animal population. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By **JORDAN B. DARLING** | jdarling@scng.com

PUBLISHED: May 20, 2024 at 6:30 a.m. | UPDATED: May 20, 2024 at 9:34 a.m.

San Bernardino's animal shelter is poised to double its intake in the coming year following the city's agreement to partner with three neighboring communities.

Starting July 1, the [San Bernardino Animal Shelter](#) will provide animal services for Colton, Fontana and Rialto. The city already has contracts with [Grand Terrace](#) and Loma Linda.

In 2023, the shelter took in 6,000 animals, two-thirds of them dogs, according to Kristine Watson, director of San Bernardino's animal services department. Next year, she said, the shelter will likely take in 12,000 [animals](#).

To get ready for the influx of animals, the San Bernardino City Council earlier this spring approved \$4 million for temporary kennels and prefabricated shelters at the Chandler Place shelter. Additionally, San Bernardino plans to fund 31 new positions in the animal services department at a cost of \$1.5 million annually, according to city documents.

Operating costs for the shelter are estimated at \$2.7 million a year.

Under the agreements among the city partners, costs will be divided among San Bernardino (53.5%), Fontana (24%), Rialto (14%), Colton (7%), Grand Terrace (1%), and Loma Linda (0.5%).

Bringing on additional staff will allow animal services to specifically focus on adoptions and partnering with other agencies to transfer animals from San Bernardino to other areas where there may be a shortage of adoptable pets, according to city spokesperson Jeff Kraus.

"It is the shelter's intent to be a no-kill shelter," Kraus said in an email. "We recently dropped just under the threshold to keep that designation."

The [San Bernardino shelter achieved no-kill status in 2020](#), meaning at least 90% of the animals in the shelter were either adopted, fostered or transferred to another shelter. The shelter saw a 19% increase in the rate of animals saved from 2019.

Currently, the San Bernardino shelter partners with about 300 rescue agencies and nonprofits in the Western U.S., Kraus said. With the anticipated doubling of the number of animals it will serve next year, the shelter wants to expand partnerships in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia. Such partnerships offer increased vet access, higher levels of spay and neutering, and larger properties to accommodate larger breeds, contributing to less overcrowding, Kraus said.

Meanwhile, Kraus said, the shelter recently received a grant from UC Davis to subsidize spay and neutering costs and other vet care for the public, an initiative aimed to help control the animal population.

According to Watson, demographics in the surrounding area reveal there are many people who may not have access to housing that allows pets, or they are unable to find housing with insurance that covers large dogs, mean there are more stray or owner-surrendered animals in the area.

To meet the need, the San Bernardino shelter is planning for a new shelter in next five years. Meantime, the shelter is taking temporary measures to accommodate the anticipated increase in animal intakes.

Prefabricated shelters with water and electrical hookups will be placed in the back parking lot of the shelter to expand its capacity in the near term, Kraus said. The shelter has 130 dog kennels currently and will add 34 kennels in temporary metal sheds.

“With all of the other modular buildings we have planned, we will have a total of about 330 separate kennels to help dogs on campus,” Watson said.

Other improvements to the animal shelter will include grading the site to control the flow of water, installation of concrete pads for the kennel housing units, and above- and below-ground site utilities that include electrical and natural gas and sewer hookups.

Earlier this year, Riverside County Animal Services announced it would discontinue its shelter service agreements with Colton, Fontana and Rialto as of June 30.

The county informed the cities a year ago that it would be refocusing its efforts on Riverside County residents and would not renew the contracts, said John Welsh, a spokesperson for Riverside County Animal Services.

Colton and Fontana had previously contracted with San Bernardino for shelter services until 2014 and 2015, respectively, when they switched to Riverside County. Rialto was in a contract with San Bernardino County until 2018 when it transferred to Riverside County for shelter services.

In 2019, Riverside County supervisors [rejected a \\$2.1 million contract with San Bernardino](#) to take over the city’s animal field, shelter and licensing services.

Since then, the city’s [animal shelter saw an update in 2021](#) supported by a three-year, [\\$1.5 million grant from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians](#) to help cover costs associated with various shelter upgrades, purchases and services.

Preliminary design work for the planned permanent shelter has been completed, Watson said. Before the city can move forward with that project, she said, the city must explore funding opportunities, long-term partnerships and create a final design.

“Really, realistically we’re looking at about five years” for that process to conclude, Watson said.

The city established a nonprofit in December 2023, “Friends of San Bernardino Animal Services Foundation,” which is meant to raise funds for the shelter and its inhabitants.

In March, the city [rolled out a mobile veterinary clinic](#), supported by a \$1.1 million grant from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, to provide vaccination, spay and neuter and microchipping services at various parks and community centers in the city.

Chino bridges the past and the future at State of the City

By Sinclair Andruska

May 18, 2024

Mayor Eunice Ulloa welcomes guests to the 2024 State of the City address held at the Chaffey College Chino Community Center Tuesday evening.

Champion photo by Sinclair Andruska

“Together, we are reaching new horizons while always staying true to our heritage as a community,” Mayor Eunice Ulloa said to the audience at Chino’s State of the City address Tuesday evening at the Chaffey College Chino Community Center.

Lights illuminated the stage where Mayor Ulloa stood behind a podium decorated with a colorful floral arrangement. A large screen displaying Chino scenery greeted the audience that was seated in rows facing the stage.

The theme of this year's event "From Heritage to Horizon," the mayor said, captures the essence of what makes Chino exceptional.

"From our agricultural history to new developments in the Preserve, we have successfully crafted a community that honors our past and lays the foundations for the future," she said.

Highlights of the past year include public safety initiatives, special events, economic growth, and infrastructure enhancements.

In 2023, the Public Works Department filled 1,262 potholes, cleaned over 18,000 square feet of graffiti, upgraded 447 streetlights to LED bulbs, swept more than 16,000 miles of curb, and planted 152 trees.

In response to rising retail theft, Chino Police Department made 34 arrests in one month for shoplifting, organized retail theft, and possession of stolen vehicles as part of an operation with the California Highway Patrol's Organized Retail Theft Taskforce.

At last year's State of the City, Mayor Ulloa described Chino as a "boomtown," a title she said still holds true as the city's average household income has grown to \$120,000 with an unemployment rate of 4.4 percent.

While the city issued almost 3,500 building permits last year, Mayor Ulloa said the city retains its small-town spirit residents have enjoyed for generations.

The spirit lives on in annual city events such as Chino Days, which drew 7,000 visitors to the Chino City Hall lawn this March.

A new addition to the event was Chino's councilmembers shown in videos where they spoke about aspects of the city in their area of expertise.

Pastor Mike Spradlin of Valley Christian Church led the invocation, and a joint Honor Guard of the Chino Police Department and Chino Valley Fire District posted colors. Chino resident Jerovia Candela sang the National Anthem.

Joel Greene, the creator and host of the television show "Curiosity Quest" on PBS for over two decades, was the event emcee. Mr. Greene is an alumnus of Don Lugo High.

This year's Spirit of Achievement award winners, Frances Rodelo and her late husband Robert Rodelo, were honored with a standing ovation. Mrs. Rodelo accepted the award and a bouquet of flowers from the mayor for the couple's service in Chino.

The Rodelo's history in the city began in 1951 when Mr. Rodelo's father Pablo purchased a Signal gas station at the corner of Sixth Street and Chino Avenue, what is now the Chino Civic Center. Robert continued the full-service gas station, a rarity as the years passed on, until 1998 when he and Frances closed the service station and re-opened the business at 5088 Chino Ave, as Rodelo's Towing Inc., where it operates today.

Mr. and Mrs. Rodelo were members of the Chino Research Group which in 2011 published "The Chino We Remember," a history of Chino's Hispanic population that took seven years to research, write, and publish.

The couple also played a role in the D Street Reunion Committee which placed a marker at the location of the D Street School, opened in 1923 for students of Mexican descent. The group sold inscribed commemorative bricks in honor of loved ones to fund the "D Street School Memorial," which was dedicated by city officials in 2006.

The Business of the Year award was given to Pro Towing, a family-owned and operated business that has been in Chino for over 16 years. Owner Sarkis Karaoghlanian accepted the award alongside his nephew, Johnny.

The mayor said the business has supported local non-profits such as Isaiah's Rock with free roadside services and by volunteering and making donations to the organization.

The home of Nicholas and Jennifer Ligouri was selected as the home beautification award winner for its drought-tolerant landscaping and "spectacular" ADU, the mayor said.

Mr. Ligouri, City of Chino Hills Community Development Director, accepted the award with his wife, who he said was the design lead on the ADU.

"The house was built in 1926 and reflects part of Chino's heritage," Mr. Ligouri said. "I'm honored to be a caretaker of that heritage for the future."

Coffee mugs given to guests after the event were designed by Chino Days chalk art contest winner Joyce Hatzidakis and her colleague Kathryn Villareal and Chino Economic Development Intern Michelle Figueroa. The mugs featured drawings of Chino landmarks including the Chino Airport sign, the Spirit of Achievement statue, the Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce building, and the Chino sign above the former T-Shirt Mart on Central Avenue.

Chino hires waste consultant for Senate Bill 1383 organic recycling

By Sinclair Andruska

May 18, 2024

The City of Chino is taking steps to help businesses and commercial properties become compliant with Senate Bill 1383, a law that requires residents, businesses, and multi-family complexes to recycle organic waste.

The city has retained CityGreen Consulting, LLC in the amount of \$64,250 for technical assistance in organic recycling compliance and record-keeping for commercial properties.

A kick-off meeting was held Wednesday with city staff.

Michael Balliet, lead consultant of CityGreen, said the company will work with the city and its waste hauler Waste Management to help businesses find what size organic waste container they need, and provide education on food waste contamination.

CalRecycle, the state recycling department, requires the city to ensure that commercial properties including multi-family properties of five units or more that receive waste bin services are compliant with organic waste recycling standards under Senate Bill 1383.

The state defines organic waste as food waste, coffee grounds and filters, landscape trimmings, food-soiled paper such as napkins and paper towels, tea bags and cut flowers and herbs.

CityGreen's job will be to assess the amount of organic waste commercial properties produce and find the correct size waste container so they do not overpay, he said.

"Businesses are struggling to make it," Mr. Balliet said. "We may find an option that could be less costly than the default waste hauler program."

Mr. Balliet said CityGreen will collaborate with the city and Waste Management to identify which commercial properties can qualify for waivers from the mandates, such as properties that generate less than 20 gallons of organic waste per week or do not have room for the additional organic waste container that is required by the law.

CalRecycle also requires the city to keep implementation and compliance records, including lists of organizations that collect edible food, generate edible food waste, and track food donations.

CityGreen will assist the city in creating and storing these records, Mr. Balliet said. The software program created by CityGreen will keep all the records in one place to retrieve for state inspections.

Expenses for the software and program assistance will be funded by a state grant the city received in 2022 to help with implementation of Senate Bill 1383.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fontana-city-council-allows-plans-for-two-more-large-warehouse-projects-to-move-forward/article_19611624-1608-11ef-9ffc-c3ad5ad83566.html

Fontana City Council allows plans for two more large warehouse projects to move forward

By RUSSELL INGOLD

May 19, 2024

Fontana City Hall

The Fontana City Council recently allowed plans for two more large warehouse projects to move forward in the southern area of the city.

The warehouses were initially given the OK by the Planning Commission back in March, but environmental groups filed appeals in an attempt to halt the two controversial developments by Prologis.

However, in a pair of 3-1 votes, the City Council rejected those appeals during the meeting on May 14. Mayor Acquanetta Warren and Councilmembers Phillip Cothran and John Roberts voted to deny the appeals and Councilmember Jesse Sandoval voted to approve them. Councilmember Peter Garcia was absent.

Over the past several years, numerous large warehouses have been built in Fontana. Proponents, including Warren, say that these projects provide good jobs, but opponents (including Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes) are distressed about air quality and traffic problems.

----- ONE OF THE TWO projects is located on the northwest corner of Slover and Cypress avenues, extending north to Interstate 10 and west to Oleander Avenue, and includes the consolidation of 22 parcels into one parcel. The 623,460-square-foot industrial commerce center will be built on about 29.8 acres and is located near the residential area containing Citrus Continuation High School and Jurupa Hills High School.

Seventeen persons spoke on this issue during the public comments portion of the meeting, and 15 of the commenters (including some union leaders) were in opposition to the project and supported the appeals.

Representatives from Ironworkers Local 433, Ironworkers Local 416, and UA Local 364 Plumbers and Pipefitters denounced Prologis for choosing not to employ the union members for this project.

However, a representative from Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) was thankful that Prologis decided to use this union's services.

The appeals had been filed by the Golden State Environmental Justice Alliance, Advocates for the Environment, and Californians Allied for a Responsible Economy (CARE CA).

The city's staff responded by saying that the appellants' concerns about air quality, energy, greenhouse gases, transportation, noise, population, social/economic justice, contamination of soil, and health impacts had been adequately addressed.

----- THE SECOND PROJECT is an industrial warehouse building totaling about 881,826 square feet on about 40.01 acres. It is located at 11115 Hemlock Avenue in an industrial area.

Public comments were heard from many of the same speakers who did not want the other project.

After the appeal was denied, the City Council took a separate vote to approve this project, which also passed by a 3-1 margin.

Near the end of the meeting, which lasted more than four hours, Warren defended the warehouses and said the city has strict standards in place to protect the environment.

“This city is following the ordinances that have been laid out at the federal level, state level, county level, and local level,” she said.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fontana-city-council-approves-resolution-adopting-1-000-campaign-sign-deposit-for-candidates-seeking-city/article_90c70800-1607-11ef-b270-4f881c7933d3.html

Fontana City Council approves resolution adopting \$1,000 campaign sign deposit for candidates seeking city offices

By RUSSELL INGOLD

May 19, 2024

Fontana City Hall

On some occasions, motorists in Fontana have seen candidates' campaign signs that were remaining alongside city streets for months after an election was over.

Now the city is taking action to try to prevent these unsightly signs from lingering beyond their allotted time period.

—

On May 14, the City Council voted 3-1 in favor of a resolution adopting a campaign sign deposit. Mayor Acquanetta Warren and City Councilmembers John Roberts and Phillip Cothran approved the idea, while Councilmember Jesse Sandoval was opposed and Councilmember Peter Garcia was absent.

In a staff report, the city said that implementing a campaign sign deposit has been identified as a measure to ensure accountability among candidates and reimburses the city for costs associated with removing non-compliant campaign signs, and therefore a fee of \$1,000 is being established.

The deposit will be fully refunded within 30 days following the conclusion of the election if candidates fully comply with the campaign sign regulations outlined in the Fontana Municipal Code.

But candidates may face partial or full forfeiture of the money if they fail to comply with campaign sign regulations, including but not limited to size limitations, placement restrictions, and cleanup requirements.

The deposit fee only applies to candidates running for city offices. The city has no jurisdiction to require a fee deposit for persons seeking to be elected as an assemblymember, senator, U.S. representative, or other position.

This proposal was first brought to the City Council during a meeting in March, but a vote was postponed when Sandoval and some residents voiced objections to some provisions.

So the resolution was amended by Deputy City Manager Ray Ebert and brought back on May 14.

Ebert said the fee will be waived for any candidates whose gross annual household income does not exceed the area median income threshold for San Bernardino County set by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, recognizing the financial challenges they may face in participating fully in the democratic process.

However, during the public comments portion of the meeting, four speakers said they were still concerned about the idea of a fee.

Bobbi Jo Chavarria said that \$1,000 is a “huge burden” for someone operating a grass-roots campaign, even if they are not in the defined low-income category. Chavarria said the fee would be a deterrent to candidates who are not members of the current City Council, who are backed by big donors.

The fee will be waived for candidates who opt not to erect any signage during their campaign period, acknowledging their choice to forego this traditional aspect of campaigning, the staff report said. The resolution will take effect immediately.

Fontana OKs \$1,000 deposit on campaign signs beginning with 2024 election

A general view of Fontana City Hall on Wednesday July 20, 2022. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By **MADISON HART** | mhart@scng.com

PUBLISHED: May 20, 2024 at 7:00 a.m. | UPDATED: May 20, 2024 at 7:01 a.m.

Hopeful politicians in Fontana must now pay a refundable \$1,000 deposit if they plan to display campaign signs around town.

The [Fontana City Council](#) approved the fee Tuesday, May 14. The fee ordinance went into effect the same day.

Candidates running for city offices in the [November 2024 election](#) will be required to pay the deposit fee. The deposit is “a measure to ensure accountability among candidates and reimburses the city for costs associated with removing non-compliant campaign signs,” according to a report prepared by city officials.

The city intends to remove any signs in public rights of way belonging to candidates who have not paid a deposit. The city would remove the signs and bill candidates, though there is currently no process for that. In addition, the city may expand the deposit requirement to candidates seeking other offices, even state legislative seats.

Bobbi Jo Chavarria, a former mayoral candidate who spoke at Tuesday's meeting, called the deposit a deterrent for future council candidates in Fontana.

While a \$1,000 fee may be "no big sweat" for some, Chavarria said, "\$1,000, even for someone who makes above the poverty wage, is still a huge request, and burden on a grassroots candidate to have their money tied up for an election cycle."

Under the ordinance adopted Tuesday, the fee would be refunded to candidates after the election if they adhere to city campaign sign regulations, including size limitations, placement restrictions and cleanup for signs in the public right of way. The fee will be waived for candidates who choose not to display campaign signs, or for candidates with incomes 50% less than the median wage in Fontana.

"This is just to get back the funding that our staff's time is taking out there," Mayor [Acquanetta Warren](#) said at the meeting. "No one's benefitting from this financially up here."

Fontana resident Stacey Ramos, another speaker at the meeting, said running for office should be accessible to all.

"Having \$1,000 to pay up front to put one sign up can actually be a detrimental effect for folks, who are like me, who don't get the money you guys get to run for office," Ramos told the council.

The council voted 4-1 to approve the sign deposit fee, with Councilmember Jesus "Jesse" Sandoval the sole dissenting vote. Sandoval questioned city staffers about the deposit, but did not specify why he voted against it.

Fontana voters will see City Council districts 2 and 3 on the Nov. 5 ballot.

Sandoval currently holds the District 2 seat, and Councilmember Peter Garcia currently holds the seat in District 3.

The ballot will also include two seats on the Fontana Unified School District school board, in areas 3 and 4.

DAILY PRESS

EDUCATION

Victor Valley Union High School District earns \$15M Community School Grant

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Victorville Daily Press

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Adelanto High School teacher Fran Herdlein spoke at a Victor Valley Union High School District Board of Trustees meeting in 2022 about the need for certain supplies and services.

He knew of a possible way to get the funding through the California Department of Education.

Nearly two years later, the Victor Valley Union High School District has been awarded a Community Schools Grant of nearly \$15 million that will serve a variety of needs for students and families at middle and high schools across the Victor Valley.

“It started with the need for tissues and proper sanitary supplies in classrooms,” said Herdlein, who has taught social studies at Adelanto High for a dozen years. “The COVID funds somehow missed tissues.”

The effects of the new state funding, however, will reach far beyond sanitary supplies, the district said.

Grant dollars can provide many services for students in need, including food, clothing, dental services, hearing tests, vision tests, and eyeglasses, district officials said. Students at eight district schools will be eligible for the assistance.

“Now the heavy lifting starts because we have to put into practice what we wrote in the grant application,” said Herdlein, adding that the district will “find community partners who can provide services that are lacking for our students and their families.”

Herdlein is quick to point out that this was not a solo effort, explaining that the Victor Valley Union High School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent Carl Coles were on board with his suggestion and took action.

“It’s really a mindset where it puts the whole child first,” said Coles, as he announced the grant award at the most recent board meeting.

Research shows that a well-implemented community schools program leads to an improvement in student outcomes including attendance, academic achievement, graduation rates, and advanced equity, according to Coles.

"We applaud California for making this significant investment into our schools, but the heart and soul of this initiative was a team that created this vision," he said. "It goes beyond the mindset that our job is just to teach reading, writing, and math; it’s much deeper than that.”

Herdlein believes the program can create a ripple effect that goes far beyond the classroom.

“It’s not just providing the student with something, but also bringing their family into the fold,” Herdlein said. “In the long run, you educate the student, you give the family what they need to excel, you create a solid base, and the whole community then changes.”

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NEWS

Barstow wastewater treatment plant earns air quality award

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The city of Barstow's Wastewater Treatment Plant has been selected to receive the 2024 Air Aware Award.

The award comes via the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, which presents the award to select permitted facilities within its jurisdiction.

“Being recognized for something we take great pride in, is a wonderful feeling for the whole team,” said Barstow Interim City Manager Andrew Espinoza, Jr. “We are honored to earn this award and will continue to hold ourselves to the highest standard rooted in integrity, responsibility, and safety.”

The award is selected based on meeting several criteria, including successful annual permit inspections, no history of compliance notices within that time period, exceptional records keeping, rules and regulation knowledge of facility staff during inspections, ease of inspection, and more.

Award recipients must also be successful in maintaining and monitoring the health of their facility based on federal, state, and local rules and regulations.

The mission of the Barstow Wastewater Treatment Plant is to treat domestic and industrial wastewater from the city and its surrounding communities, city officials stated.

The treatment must be in a manner that provides current and future customers with safe, efficient, and cost-effective wastewater treatment services while protecting the community, public health, plant staff and the environment from adverse impacts of wastewater and treatment by-products.

The Barstow Wastewater Treatment Plant is the first recipient in 2024 and is among seven total recipients this year.

The Barstow facility also has the distinction of being only the second Air Aware recipient in the award's short history to have also previously received Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's highest honor, the Exemplar Award, in 2012-2013.

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• Opinion Columnist

Does your city have elected attorneys, clerks, treasurers? And how much do they make?

Column: They can also make a bundle, or almost nothing, our analysis finds

Supporters of local control hold signs as Huntington Beach Mayor Tony Strickland, City Attorney Michael Gates, and Councilman Casey McKeon, speak during a news conference at the Huntington Beach Civic Center on Tuesday, February 14, 2023, concerning California State Attorney General Rob Bonta's threat of litigation if the city refuses the state-mandated housing goals. City officials said they will contest efforts by the state which requires them to add more than 13,000 more housing units to meet the state's Housing Accountability Act. (Photo by Mark Rightmire, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **TERI SFORZA** | tsforza@scng.com | Orange County Register
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When Huntington Beach city councilmembers wanted to [demand identification from voters](#) (despite threats that this violated state law), and [fought more low-income housing](#) (despite state commands), their city attorney didn't grimace or drag his hand across his neck or shake his head vehemently "NO!" in an attempt to dissuade them.

No, Michael Gates is a rare breed — an elected, rather than appointed, city attorney, which might explain his crusading bent and eagerness to take on the powers-that-be. "We will defend the city from attacks by the state," [Gates vowed last month after the state sued the city \(yet again\)](#). "We will defend the will of the people."

Elected city attorneys and clerks and treasurers and police chiefs are scarce in California, and their modus operandi can be quite different from the professionals who answer to city councils rather than directly to voters. There are only a couple of hundred of these elected professionals for cities in California. (We took [another look at elected mayors and councilmembers](#) – and their pay – recently.)

The elected professionals often found in older cities, and conspicuously absent in newer ones (where focus is often on thrift and efficiency).

The most highly paid among these rare city electeds is Santa Clara's police chief — the only city police chief in the state still elected by the people. Wages were \$329,977, with health and retirement benefits worth \$207,218, for total compensation of \$537,195, according to controller's data from 2022, the most recent year available. A ballot measure in March sought to make the police chief's position appointed rather than elected, but [it tanked spectacularly](#).

Next up was San Francisco's sheriff (showing up here only because San Francisco is both city and county; elected law enforcement heads are much more common in county than in city governments, so San Francisco is its own animal). The sheriff had total wages of \$294,430 and health and retirement benefits worth \$185,540, for total compensation of \$479,970.

Then came the elected city attorneys. Long Beach's had total comp of \$445,462; Redondo Beach's had total comp of \$401,786; and Huntington Beach's had total comp of \$395,062.

City attorneys have a very important job: They're the city's lawyer, trying to keep it out of trouble, defending it in lawsuits, advising on what the city can and can't do. The overwhelming majority of California city councils directly appoint the city attorney — in 469 of 482, according to [the League of California Cities](#). And the vast majority of city attorneys are not city employees — about two-thirds of them — instead working for outside firms that contract with the city for legal services. Only one-third of city attorneys are actually on staff as city employees.

County by county

Here are some other most well-compensated city electeds, by county:

Orange County. There are fewer than a dozen of these officials in all of O.C. After Huntington Beach's city attorney, there was Laguna Beach's city clerk, with total comp of \$178,179; Huntington Beach's city clerk, with total comp of \$157,810; Laguna Beach's city treasurer, with total comp of \$148,176; Huntington Beach's city treasurer, with total comp of \$101,042; and San Clemente's city treasurer, with total comp of (drum roll please) \$5,747. Brea also had an elected treasurer who made barely enough to stay in coffee for a year (\$600), while Orange's treasurer collected nothing.

Committee)

Riverside County. Just more than a baker's dozen here, led by Blythe's city clerk, with total comp of \$213,214; Blythe's city treasurer, with total comp of \$199,481; Cathedral City's city treasurer, with total comp of \$44,237; Coachella's city clerk, with total comp of \$27,471; Banning's city treasurer, with total comp of \$20,724; and Corona's city treasurer, with total comp of \$14,612.

Los Angeles County. More than 60 elected professional positions dot the municipal landscape here, several with total comp close to or well exceeding \$200,000. After the aforementioned Long Beach and Redondo Beach city attorneys, there was Long Beach's city prosecutor, with total comp of \$357,545; Long Beach's city auditor, \$342,547; Los Angeles' city attorney, \$299,373; Los Angeles city controller, \$293,674; Long Beach city attorney, \$291,827; Glendale city treasurer, \$245,812; Compton city attorney, \$228,461; Burbank city clerk, \$205,636; Redondo Beach city clerk, \$202,852; Burbank city treasurer, \$201,944; Monrovia city clerk, \$195,943; and Torrance city clerk, \$195,105.

San Bernardino County. Fifteen served here, led by Rialto's city treasurer with total comp of \$359,440; Twentynine Palms' city clerk, \$132,964; Redlands city clerk, \$94,297; Colton city treasurer, \$46,692; Ontario city treasurer, \$41,488; and Ontario city clerk, \$41,261.

What's it all about?

City treasurers typically oversee investments and investment policy, and monitor revenue and cash flows.

City clerks prepare and maintain the city's official records. City prosecutors might handle specific types of crime committed in the city, such as misdemeanors; city auditors keep an eye on the books via performance audits, financial audits and special investigations; and city controllers approve payments and handle the city's accounting.

Cities that elect these positions are often old-timers. Being directly accountable to the voters was the wisdom of the time (though most voters would be hard-pressed to name their city treasurer or why they voted for one candidate over the other), and change is hard.

Brea, for example, has had an elected city treasurer as long as anyone can remember — and the city incorporated in 1917. A measure to convert the position from elected to appointed was rejected by voters in 1996. The treasurer’s modest \$50-a-month stipend was set by the city council.

Which takes us back to Huntington Beach, founded in the 1880s and incorporated as a charter city in 1909. It’s a full-service metropolis — meaning it has its own police, fire, public works and other key departments — and employs more than 1,000 people, according to its [latest audit](#). Its governance structure was set in stone in that charter, with seven elected city councilmembers as well as an elected treasurer, attorney and clerk, each serving four-year terms.

“This means that if the City were to ever pursue changing that structure, it would need to be placed on the ballot and put out to a vote by Huntington Beach residents,” spokesperson Jennifer Carey said by email. “Additionally, only 10 cities in California have elected city attorneys but because it’s typically the larger cities (e.g., Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, etc.), 70% of voters in California elect their attorney — because those 10 cities have 70% of the state’s population.”

Which is an interesting way to look at it. Attorneys elected by the voters may have a different relationship with the city council than those appointed by the city council, the League of California Cities noted in [“Counsel and Council.”](#) Appointment by the city council creates a more traditional employer-employee relationship “and, at times, loyalties and reporting obligations may become blurred,” it said.

“Elected city attorneys are likely to have a greater sense of duty to the public, who they ‘serve’ and who elected them. In practice, this can take many forms. For example, elected city attorneys are much more likely to conduct public forums, issue public opinions or reports on matters of community interest, and provide information connecting residents and constituents to pro bono legal services. The relative ‘independence’ of the elected city attorney from the city council (who, after all, cannot fire them) can also lead city attorneys to be more direct and emphatic in communicating their legal advice.... Although the elected city attorney is accountable to the public through elections, the ‘city’ (not the public) is the city attorney’s client.” (istockphoto)

One can extrapolate the public-facing tendencies infuse other elected positions as well.

Desirable

Despite voters often knowing little about these posts, they can be fiercely fought over.

In Redlands, the city clerk has been an elected position since 1890, shortly after it incorporated, said spokesman Carl Baker. The first was L.W. Clark, who was re-elected every two years until 1906, when A.J. Leonard beat him by a three-vote margin. Clark came back to win the office in 1908 but was defeated again in 1910, this time by R. Warner Thomas by more than 200 votes. Successors included Clint P. Hook, who held the office for 30 years (1914 to 1944), and Lorrie Poyzer, who held it for some 24 years (1983 until 2007). The current clerk, Jeanne Donaldson, was first elected in 2016.

They can also be evangelists for the cause.

In Laguna Beach, the city clerk and treasurer have been elected since the city incorporated in 1927. The treasurer has been part-time since the 1980s, but the clerk is full-time.

Laura Parisi, Laguna Beach's elected treasurer, recently helped train other municipal treasurers via a "[Fundamentals of Public Funds Investing](#)" course. In-house treasurers with investment chops know their cities better than third parties, the training said, and can tailor policies to the community based on input from the public, investment review committees, city managers, outside audits firm and in-house legal counsel. It's often most cost-effective, directly responsible and responsive, the presentation argued. It also allows for community investment, where dollars benefit the city.

The elected city attorney bit can be expensive. Between 2022 and 2023, Huntington Beach's city attorney expenses rose nearly 50%, from \$2.2 million to \$3.2 million, according to [city financial reports](#). That's because the city council approved four new positions within the office, including a community prosecutor, municipal law attorney, civil litigation attorney and legal assistant, Carey said.

After a group sued over Huntington Beach's refusal to include enough low-income housing, the city ultimately agreed to add more but fought an order to pay the group more than \$3.5 million in attorneys' fees. It lost in the Court of Appeal, which noted that "[t]he litigation against the City was instrumental in the City adopting [a Housing Element], which conferred a significant benefit to residents in Huntington by assuring that development in Huntington included lower-income housing."

Huntington Beach paid that in full in September, so we'll be looking for it on next year's financial reports.

Last week, the state secured [a court order](#) holding Huntington Beach accountable for flouting its housing element law, and the city must come into compliance in 120 days.

“Huntington Beach is not above the law — that’s the essence of today’s ruling. Local governments up and down our state should take notice,” said Attorney General Rob Bonta in a prepared statement. “We are facing a housing crisis of epic proportions, and my office will continue to act with great urgency, working with cities and counties that genuinely want to be part of the solution and holding accountable those that do not.”

Gates promised to file an appeal.

“In spite of Attorney General Bonta’s early victory lap... this case is far from over,” he said in a prepared statement. “We’ll continue the fight to defend Huntington Beach from the Sacramento assault to destroy our great City..... The City has its best lawsuit against the State’s high-density housing mandates presently in Federal Court. We’ll continue these battles on all fronts and we will not be deterred or intimidated.”

Stand by for the [battle over the voter ID law](#). It’ll be a doozy.