



# COUNTY OF SAN BENITO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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January 25, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review  
Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5094  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget &  
Fiscal Review  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### **Re: Priorities for San Benito County proposed projects for the 2022-2023 State Budget Consideration**

Dear Committee Chairs Skinner and Ting:

On behalf of the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, we thank you for your work and commitment to improving the lives of all Californians. In addition, we write to highlight some of the County's most crucial budget priorities for the 2022-23 fiscal year, which we respectfully ask the Legislature to consider when allocating resources as part of the state budget for 2022-23. As you are aware, the state is expected to have a sizable surplus of almost \$46 billion. Unfortunately, the needs of our community continue to grow to the point that we have exhausted all of our small local resources immensely, and we have no remaining avenues for relief. In light of this, we ask that the Legislature make considerable investments in our County's parks, homelessness, and facilities that are paramount to our County residents' success and improving their quality of life. For these reasons and many more, we ask for your consideration of the following projects that will make significant improvements and lead to a better quality of life for our residents:

#### **1. Parks: \$14,646,420 million**

The first Regional Park in San Benito County has received much interest from the public. We request additional funding to complete the entire build-out in the following construction cycle. Serving as a multi-use facility, this park will feature amenities such as bicycle facilities, sports facilities, the ultimate playground, and fitness facilities for our residents. Combined with the natural beauty of the location and an accessible trail system that doubles as the region's first official cross-country facility, Riverview Regional park has the potential to attract out-of-county visitors. Designed to accommodate all cultures, Riverview Regional Park will be the first park in the County to include bilingual signage for the convenience of our Spanish-speaking visitors/residents. Additional features include, the planned "food court" area and the remote control race track, offer our constituents private/public partnerships and local employment opportunities. The concept plan has been developed and approved by the Board of Supervisors, the County Parks Commission, our local partners, the San Benito County High School District,

the San Benito County Health Foundation, and REACH. The regional park can be realized at **\$9 million**, bringing a better quality of life to our residents.

Sunnyside Park is the first waypoint on the future river trail and provides an excellent opportunity to connect neighborhoods. Sunnyside Park is located on both sides of Hospital Road and is currently under design. The County has secured \$800,000 for the park's construction. This first phase will offer sporting opportunities, multiple playgrounds, and trails. The ultimate design is achievable with additional funding of **\$1 million**, which would allow us to restore the dog park component and expand the picnic facilities. Future phases will create a pedestrian tunnel under Hospital Road, providing grade-separated pedestrian access to both sides of the facility.

Vetrans memorial park is located in the heart of the City of Hollister and heavily used by our youth and many recreational leagues. The fields are maintained by the community and the County supports other functions in the park. The current restrooms are outdated and on a septic system; To replace the bathroom, and demolish the current system, add the required plumbing, water, and system would cost around **\$3.9million**.

Historical Park serves as a recreational and educational gem in San Benito County, located at 8300 Highway 25, one mile south of Tres Pinos. Set on 35 acres of bucolic, shade-tree-dotted countryside next to Tres Pinos Creek, with six acres of county historical exhibits, the Park is the perfect place for a family reunion, a picnic lunch, or a stroll around the grounds. The historical village, a San Benito County Historical Society project, sets the time to visit an old schoolhouse, a dance hall, a firehouse, a bar, a livery stable and barn, and a view of just about every antique farm implement known to humanity. An indoor model train track is currently under construction that includes a replica of the Hollister-Tres Pinos line, used to haul hay from the southern end of San Benito County into the ""big city""." The restrooms are also in need of replacement which would cost **\$1.3 million**.

## **2. Tiny home project for homeless individuals: \$14,579,900 million**

The Tiny Home Village project would support homeless individuals and families with permanent supportive housing and transitional housing coupled with case management and supportive services.

Although emergency shelters and encampments are a critical need, homelessness will continue to be an issue without other housing solutions. There is a homeless problem in San Benito County, evident by the high number of homeless individuals roaming downtown daily and in other areas of the County. Although there was a decrease in the homeless population (according to the 2019 Homeless Census), we are far from solving the problem. There is a need to develop permanent housing to address homelessness in San Benito County. A Tiny Home Village model has been discussed for years as a transitional housing option. An example of a Tiny Village project in Eugene, Oregon, as shown below:



Individuals housed in permanent supportive housing will also receive case management and supportive services to increase their probability of housing retention by addressing their personal needs. This project will follow the Housing First Model. Clients are provided housing regardless of their ongoing issues such as mental health, drug addictions, lack of employment, and all other matters. It is the goal that while they are housed, they will receive the necessary services to address their issues and become successful.

The Tiny Village Project consists of 50 units of, 250 to 300 square feet as permanent housing, 2,000-3,000 square foot office & multi-purpose room, and infrastructure costs. In addition, funds can also convert an existing building into temporary housing units for homeless families as transitional housing. Case Management, supportive services, housing navigation, job training, and housing placement will be provided while participating in the transitional housing program.

The ultimate vision is to reduce homelessness by 50% in five years. To accomplish this, the low-income housing inventory and housing for homeless individuals and families must increase with more significant investments for permanent supportive housing.

### 3. County Facilities: \$153,443,000 million

The San Benito County, Free Library Building, houses all the operations of the County Library and serves the community as a Free Library. The County of San Benito owns the original 1960, 15,570 GSF single-story structure. A Facility Condition Index survey conducted in 2020 found the building condition in need of deferred maintenance and noted in poor condition. A 2016 Library Needs Assessment has identified the current 7,000 GSF of service space supporting an occupancy of 43 individuals at a time. A library expansion would relieve current space restrictions and provide upgraded fire safety, mechanical, lighting, and an additional estimated 6,000 program library space configurations noted as currently inadequate to the existing Free

Library building. The Free Library serves more than 114,000 public visitors each year. The proposed Capital Improvement Project is critical for the life-safety of the County employees and the public to conduct a seismic strengthening engineering evaluation and follow with a capital improvement project to recommend seismic retrofits. An additional benefit anticipated in the seismic critical infrastructure upgrade is replacing the dated 1960 library stack shelving system with more sustainable material and a structurally safe book stack infrastructure system. The Library project request is **\$10 million** to increase physical capacity.

San Benito County Facilities Master Plan identifies safety and security components at the County's owned buildings facilities that need to be addressed. The assessments and analyses of existing conditions provide a snapshot of the current safety and security measures at County facilities identified the **\$1.7 million** required to address deficiencies. Hall of Records was built in the early 1900s, expanded to a second store in the 1960s, and has changed its functions over the past decades. Hall of Records building is in need of many projects totaling **\$3,000,000**, including but not limited to adding an elevator, implementing American Disability Act (ADA) improvements, fire suppression, abatement project, signage, and departmental improvements. The final request of **\$2.5 million** is to demolish two old facilities that are currently not occupied and share the lot with other County facilities. As the building ages, the materials and foundation are slowly deteriorating.

To address improvements to the downtown campus. A new government campus would include constructing two new buildings to house various departments. The plan consists of demolishing and replacing most existing facilities except the Administration Building. The current administration building would be repurposed to house other departments. The total estimated cost is **\$136.243 million**.

As the state contemplates where to invest its resources, we respectfully ask you to consider the lack of resources and funding that is historically allocated to San Benito County. We would ask that you reflect on the incredibly positive impact state investments would have in San Benito County. The County hopes the state will partner with us to continue to provide an equitable, sustainable, and bright future for our residents.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our requests, we ask that you reach out to our County Advocate, Michelle Rubalcava from Nielsen Merksamer Parrinello Gross & Leoni, LLP at [mrubalcava@nmgovlaw.com](mailto:mrubalcava@nmgovlaw.com) or (916) 446-6752.

Respectfully,

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Bea Gonzales  
Chair of the Board of Supervisors  
Board of Supervisor, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
San Benito County

CC: The Honorable Senator Anna Caballero  
The Honorable Assembly Member Robert Rivas