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Digging for dollars

Riverside has planned wisely to boost its share of federal stimulus funds

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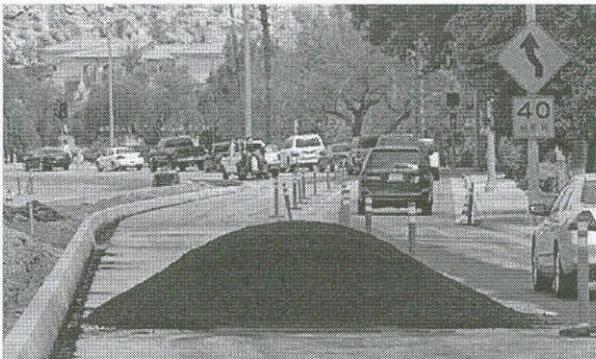
By RON LOVERIDGE

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is a historic effort by the federal government to respond to the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. The \$787 billion stimulus bill includes funding for state and municipal agencies to use on projects that will breathe life into local economies and create much-needed jobs for residents.

As a vice president of the National League of Cities, I work with the Obama administration to ensure that the nearly 19,000 cities and towns across the country receive the recovery dollars locally.

But, the reality of the situation is that there will be "winners and losers" in this process. This is why Riverside City Hall has worked hard to develop a plan for economic recovery that leverages the funds we receive from the stimulus bill and puts Riverside in the best position to gain as much as possible.

[Story continues below](#)



Special To the Press Enterprise
Riverside pushes forward this month with road work at Central and Arlington avenues. The city should be well-positioned to win federal stimulus grants because it has a long list of ready-to-go projects, along with a focus on green economic development.

Ready to start

Riverside's own economic recovery plan includes funding projects that will immediately create jobs, stabilize the housing market, accelerate capital spending, invest in local businesses, develop our work force, and attract green technology investment to Riverside.

We assigned a dedicated, full-time staff member to assure that Riverside will receive as many stimulus dollars as possible.

Riverside has prioritized projects based on stimulus bill timelines and we lined up many "shovel-ready" projects -- projects that are ready to implement immediately once funding is received. We have also focused on projects of regional significance that leverage regional or community partners to be more competitive.

Federal stimulus dollars are available in two categories -- formula and competitive.

Streets and more

Formula dollars are automatically allocated to cities based on predetermined criteria such as population, unemployment and housing statistics.

The formula dollars were the first to be declared and Riverside is receiving more than \$27 million. These funds will be used to continue or create projects that were in jeopardy because of a lack of financial support.

Examples of the projects proposed to be completed with these funds include:

Construction of the Van Buren Boulevard/Highway 91 interchange.

Street resurfacing/rehabilitation projects.

Alessandro Boulevard median landscaping.

A new fare-box system for Parks, Recreation & Community Services special transit vehicles for the elderly and disabled.

Compressed natural gas facility equipment to support special transit vehicles.

Three new police positions.

Four replacement motorcycles and 15 marked patrol vehicles for the police department.

Energy-efficient government building retrofits.

Solar-powered trash compactors.

Foreclosed-home energy efficiency rehabilitation grants.

These programs and projects are estimated to create and/or retain 426 jobs in Riverside.

Competitive funding comes from grants the city must apply for. Riverside is in competition with hundreds of other cities to receive these funds. To date, the city has applied for \$69 million in competitive grants and is aggressively pursuing all possible grant opportunities the stimulus bill provides. We have received award notifications on two grants for \$607,000 for the employment of 200 students during the summer. More award notices are expected in the next few weeks.

Competitive plans

Competitive grant proposals submitted include applications for new water facilities and programs, alternative vehicles, vehicle retrofits for cleaner air, additional police officers, enhancement of the traffic safety program, green infrastructure (a new alternative fueling station at the Water Quality Control Plant), and gang intervention programs.

A Green focus

We are keyed to apply for additional competitive grant opportunities as guidelines become available from the federal government. When guidelines come down in the energy categories, Riverside will make its green economic development strategy a primary focus.

With accountability and transparency a top priority, we are launching a Web site where residents can stay informed about our progress and find out about projects as they are awarded. A link on the city's home page at www.riversideca.gov will soon be available.

The federal funds Riverside receives will be put to immediate use stimulating our local economy and creating jobs for those who need them most.

As mayor, I will organize all possible efforts so that key Riverside projects and programs are funded through the stimulus bill.

Now is a time of action to ensure Riverside's prosperity and competitiveness, and there is no time to spare.

Ron Loveridge is the mayor of Riverside.
