

Cabazon, Cherry Valley residents still view county improvements with wary eye

11:47 AM PDT on Sunday, April 13, 2008

By ERIN WALDNER
The Press-Enterprise

CABAZON - To Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, Cabazon is practically a textbook example of what redevelopment can do for a town.

Over the past several years, the county has used redevelopment funds to build a \$3.4 million sheriff's substation and a \$2.78 million community center in Cabazon and to spruce up local homes.

Redevelopment can be a controversial issue, fought tooth and nail in some communities. When it initially was proposed in Cabazon, it had some detractors, and some still oppose it.

Story continues below

CABAZON REDEVELOPMENT: Riverside County has been redeveloping Cabazon since 1989. In that time, several major projects have been completed in the community, with more on the way. As a designated redevelopment area, a portion of the local property tax increment goes toward paying for projects such as these.

Cabazon Fleet Services Complex
Status: Under construction
Total cost of project: \$6.25 million (Redevelopment funding: \$1.25 million)

Riverside County Sheriff's Substation
Status: Opened summer 2003
Total cost of project: \$3.4 million (Redevelopment funding: 100 percent)

James A. Venable Community Center
Status: Opened summer 2003
Total cost of project: \$2.79 million (Redevelopment funding: 100 percent)

New Cabazon Fire Station
Status: Under construction
Total cost of project: \$4.6 million (Redevelopment funding: \$600,000)
Marion Ashley, 5th District Riverside County supervisor, stands in front of the fire station under construction at the corner of Inne and Broadway streets in Cabazon. It is one of several county redevelopment projects in the area.
MARK ZALESKI/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

SOURCE: RIVERSIDE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
ALBERT CORONA/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

[Click to enlarge](#)

But Ashley says without the financial assistance of redevelopment, a lot of the changes in Cabazon wouldn't have happened.

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors designated Cabazon a redevelopment area in 1989, allowing the county to funnel a portion of the local property tax increment into improvements such as the community center.

In all, the county has spent around \$20 million on redevelopment in Cabazon, an unincorporated community of about 3,000.

Ashley said the purpose of redevelopment is "to revitalize the community and set the area up for economic development in the future."

He anticipates considerable industrial growth in the Cabazon area, he said.

Community Hub

The James A. Venable Community Center opened in 2003, the same year as the sheriff's substation. The center offers a variety of recreational and social services, including hot lunches for senior citizens and after-school programs for children.

"It's the hub of the community," said Miriam Miranda, center director for the Family Service Association, which operates from the community center. Miranda said holiday events at the center, which is next to a park, are well attended.

The county also has used redevelopment money to upgrade the town's water supply and make improvements to homes, including fresh paint.

"This is an area that needed help. It's getting help and it's going to get more help," Ashley said.

A \$4.6 million fire station and a \$5 million fleet fueling station for county vehicles are under construction in Cabazon.

"This is going to be the nicest building in town," Ashley said of the fire station.

Plans also call for a new library, skate park and day care center next to the community center and a sewer system.

Ashley said the \$3 million sewer system is in design. It ultimately will be taken over by the Cabazon Water District, which will maintain it. He said the district will charge connection fees and retain some of the revenue. The rest will go to the redevelopment agency to fund other projects.

It will take about two years to build the system, Ashley said.

Some Cabazon residents view redevelopment as an effort by outsiders to take over, said resident Martin Sanderson, a tax accountant who teaches children tumbling at the community center.

But most residents support the improvements, as he does, he said.

Viewed With Suspicion

A few miles to the west, Cherry Valley residents are looking at a county redevelopment proposal with suspicion.

Riverside County officials are exploring the idea of expanding the Mid County redevelopment area, which includes Cabazon, to that community. Some Cherry Valley residents see it as a second attempt to bring sewers to the community.

In September, the Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District proposed a ballot measure that would have given the district authority to extend sewers to the community, but ratepayers rejected the plan. Residents have said they don't want redevelopment because they don't want the town to lose its rural quality.

The county Board of Supervisors will decide the issue.

Cabazon resident Teresa Bui, 37, said she and her husband support redevelopment. The family moved from Moreno Valley in 2001, when they had a chance to buy a home in Cabazon, she said.

The mother of seven said the improvements that come with redevelopment, including better roads, can attract new families.

Some older residents of Cabazon oppose the changes, Bui said, "but you have to look at the overall benefit."

Bob Duhnman, 72, moved from Wilmington to Cabazon in 1986 and likes the peace and quiet.

"There's no houses behind me," he said. "You bring the people in, they're going to ruin all of it."

He doesn't want to see the town get sidewalks or sewers, he said.

"I get along without it," he said.

Reach Erin Waldner at 909-806-3060 or ewaldner@PE.com