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Kern County Supervisors Approve New Parks & Infrastructure Investments in Underserved Communities

BAKERSFIELD, CA -- On Tuesday, August 27th, the Kern County Board of Supervisors allocated \$1.59 million for parks improvements in the Kern County Budget. These investments include the installation of lighting and sidewalks in Greenfield Park and the creation of a basketball court in the Shafter Mexican Colonia. The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment (CRPE), in collaboration with Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability as well as community groups from Lost Hills, Lytle Avenue in Delano, Shafter Mexican Colonia, Greenfield, Arvin, Weedpatch, and Lamont, worked tirelessly to advocate for a budget that prioritizes underserved communities in Kern.

Due to historic underinvestment by the County, many Kern County residents - especially those from low income communities, communities of color, and unincorporated communities - live in unsafe environments that are heavily polluted and lack key infrastructure. CRPE Organizer Gustavo Aguirre said: "In order to improve safety and health in Kern County, residents have been working with Kern organizations, including CRPE and members of Building Healthy Communities, to submit an equity-based budget proposal for the fiscal budget 2019-20. Our expectation has been that the Supervisors want to honor the communities' needs and recommendations, and that's what we fought for."

During the budget process, residents also asked the Board of Supervisors to invest in street improvements in underserved communities. "Potholes, skewed edges, and lack of maintenance make it a shame that pedestrians have don't have proper sidewalks to walk safely. Damage to cars is also a result of disregarded county roads in Delano. It's time these investments were made to our roads," said Delano resident Cithlalic Martinez.

In addition to the increase in parks spending, the County has applied for a \$1.4 million Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant to pave Lytle Avenue, a road in Delano that has remained unpaved for decades. "Our street is flooded every time it rains. The street is not paved and our kids sometimes miss school. Families struggle to get out of their homes. I'm grateful that the Supervisors understand the importance of paving our streets to protect our health and support students by minimizing lost days of school. Hearing the news that our road may finally be paved made me very happy. Hopefully, we're finally going to have a proper road." said Esthela Perez, a resident of Lytle Avenue. This grant application is a step towards a long-needed improvement for those living along Lytle Avenue.

This year's budget allocations for building and improving infrastructure in Kern County's underserved communities are equitable steps towards making a healthier and safer future a reality for all Kern residents. "Our community in Lamont needs recreation spaces for youth and residents. I'm glad that as a result of our advocacy, allocations have been made across Kern County, and especially here in south Kern," said Diana Mireles of Komite Progreso de Lamont.

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The Center on Race, Poverty, & the Environment (CRPE) is an environmental justice organization providing legal, organizing, and technical assistance to grassroots groups in low-income communities and communities of color. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).