

L.A. Now

California: This just in

Financially troubled Adelanto approves plan to build another jail



Detainees walk down a hallway at an immigrant detention facility in Adelanto. The Adelanto City Council approved an agreement to build a new 3,264-bed jail on the edge of town. (Cheryl A. Guerrero / Los Angeles Times)

By **KATE LINTHICUM**

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The cash-strapped city of Adelanto, already home to three detention facilities, has approved a plan to build another.

This week the Adelanto City Council voted 4-1 to approve a development agreement that allows the city build a new 3,264-bed jail on the edge of town. City officials say they hope to lease the facility to Los Angeles County to house overflow inmates from the county's crowded jails.

A contract with the county would bring in more than \$1 million annually in tax revenue and help fill a looming budget deficit, officials say.

But critics say the vote was premature because the city has not yet signed a contract with the county. They also question whether the county will have a need for an overflow jail facility after the passage of Proposition 47, a voter-approved initiative that reduces penalties for drug possession and other nonviolent crimes.

“There will possibly be no need for the county to send inmates elsewhere,” said Christina Fialho, who heads a campaign against jail expansion in Adelanto.

County officials are still assessing how the new regulations will affect the size of its inmate population.

Several county supervisors have said they would consider leasing space in Adelanto, with Supervisor Don Knabe expressing support for the proposal.

But this week, newly elected Supervisor Hilda Solis suggested she may oppose it. Solis, who warned at her inauguration earlier this month against an “incarceration-industrial complex,” said in a statement that her priority was investing in mental health and substance abuse treatment, not new jail beds. “It is fiscally reckless to spend tens of thousands of dollars a year housing and feeding people who could be out working,” Solis said.

Doctor R. Crants, a Nashville-based private developer who is pushing the project, said he planned to meet with L.A. County supervisors to pitch the plan in the coming month.

He said he was hopeful that he could win approval of a deal under which the county pays Adelanto \$88 dollars per inmate per day for 12 years. If that fails, he said he would look elsewhere to find a tenant for the new jail.

There are already three detention facilities in the industrial park near where the fourth jail would be built.

Construction crews are currently adding 650 beds at a privately run detention facility for immigrants. Nearby, San Bernardino County recently completed a \$145-million expansion of its

jail. A third prison in the same vicinity started housing state inmates last year.

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