



Corporate Backgrounder

The Big Fresno Fair: More than just the Central Valley's largest event!

The Big Fresno Fair (District), founded in 1884, is the fifth largest fair in the State of California. The District represents the 21st District Agricultural Association, an entity of the California Department of Food & Agriculture Division of Fairs & Expositions.

The District's \$11 million 2023 budget is managed by Interim CEO, Christina Estrada, administrative management and staff, and it is overseen by Board members appointed by the Governor's office. The Fresno Fairgrounds serves as an economic stimulator for the community, contributing more than \$77.1 million in economic impact to Fresno County annually, according to an independent report from 2015 – a figure that surely has increased over time.

The District derives its annual income from three main sources: the annual Big Fresno Fair event, weekly Satellite Wagering and interim events. The largest interim events include the weekly Swap Meet, the annual Hmong Cultural New Year Celebration and the Home & Garden Shows.

The Big Fresno Fair is far more than just the Central Valley's largest annual event, attracting more than 600,000 patrons each year. It is a year-round rental facility spanning 165 acres held under a 50-year lease with the County of Fresno, hosting over 250 events annually – which range from large public events to business conferences and family events. It operates a year-round satellite wagering facility, The Starting Gate, and is home to two award-winning Museums – The Big Fresno Fair Museum and the Fresno County Historical Museum. Annual fairgrounds attendance is more than 1.7 million.

In the past decade, the District has invested in excess of \$17 Million on capital improvements to provide Central Valley residents a facility they can enjoy and be proud of. Some of the improvements have included the following:

- In 2023, new asphalt was laid from the north end of the Grandstand, all the way down to the Butler Avenue gate entrance. In 2019, new asphalt was laid from the front of the Grandstand, out to the Chance Avenue gate entrance.
- In 2021, the Museum Park transformed into the Hispanic Heritage Plaza, where attendees can learn about the rich history of the Hispanic culture that is right here in our Central Valley.
- Since 2016, more than 15 iconic neon signs were acquired, restored and put on display around the Paul Paul Theater for all to enjoy. Some featured signs are the Fresno Motel, MARS Drive-In, Hacienda Motel and Louie Kee's Market among many others!
- In 2019, an additional 29 surveillance cameras were added, bringing the total to 89, which cover the entire Fairgrounds and are utilized to provide the safest environment possible.
- In 2018, the 32 ft. tall Tractor Tree was added that features 23 tractors and more than 1,000 tractor parts. The Tractor Tree was selected and featured in the 2019 Fall Edition Book of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!*
- In 2017, all new concrete pathways added to Kiddieland create a smoother surface for families and strollers to utilize, as well as minimize dust and dirt.
- In 2017, the now "Livin' Local Marketplace" building was remodeled, redoing all of the electrical, updating the walls and adding a fresh new coat of paint.



- In 2017, the horse racing track and Infield received some electrical upgrades, as well as water improvements.
- In 2013, The Big Fresno Fair Museum was created.
- Creation of the Table Mountain Rancheria Park with nine whimsical attractions, including the award-winning Pirates in the Park life-size pirate ship.
 - Construction of the Park Area spans from 2006 – present.
- Since 2010, the restrooms in the Jr. Exhibits, Wells Fargo Agriculture, Fine Arts & Photography, Carnival Lot, Livestock Pavilion, as well as Commerce and Industry Commerce building were completely remodeled to meet ADA regulations.
- Three Fair entrances were reconstructed to be more efficient and safer, as well as more aesthetically pleasing; Chance Avenue Gate (2004), Butler Avenue Gate (2005) and Kings Canyon Gate (2008).
- Major electrical, sewer and water upgrades have been made throughout the entire facility.
- The Fresno County Sesquicentennial Park, dedicated in 2006, permanently signifies the unity and collaboration of Fresno County cities.
- Projects including the 14,000-panel solar project and recycled rubber flooring installed in four critical areas that saved California landfills from over 21,000 tires have catapulted the District into the spotlight as an emerging “environmentally friendly” leader.
- Over \$5 million in horse racing track improvements in the last decade, including the complete remodel of the Paddock and addition of the Luxury Deck in 2010.
- The 1890 replica of The Big Fresno Fair’s grandstand entrance including a life-sized horse and jockey at the infield parking entrance at Kings Canyon Avenue adds a historic monument to this valued tradition.
- The RV Park, added in 2009, contains 72 spaces for Fair vendors and concessionaires or year-round interim events customers.
- Fresno Assembly Center Memorial was upgraded in collaboration with the Japanese American Citizens League. The Fair has assisted with electrical and sewer updates that were necessary for the project, and The Friends of the Fair, The Big Fresno Fair’s 501 (c) 3 non-profit foundation, was a major sponsor.

These attractions and improvements are just a small sampling of how the District has continually improved over the years. This type of dedication to the betterment of the Fairgrounds has not gone unnoticed. The following awards have been received in recent years:

- The highest honor within the Fair industry, the Merrill Award, which recognizes fair programs that demonstrate outstanding vision, leadership and excellence, has been awarded to The Big Fresno Fair five times, putting the Fair in a very exclusive group of fairs who have attained such a level of accolades.
 - 2007 - Pirates in the Park attraction within Table Mountain Rancheria Park,
 - 2012 - “Feed the Need” Food Drive
 - 2014 - The Big Fresno Fair Museum and a documentary-style video, *Heritage Talks*.
 - 2017 - Creation of the Fresno County Historical Museum
 - 2021 - “Health & Safety Public Outreach Campaign” in partnership with the Fresno County Department of Public Health



- The Big Fresno Fair was named the first-ever Western Fairs Association California Feature Fair in 2009, when representatives from throughout the Western United States, Canada and Mexico visited to learn about the Fair's capital improvements, exhibits and special programs.
- In 2010, The Big Fresno Fair was also featured on PBS' then new TV series with the late Huell Howser called "California's Golden Fairs." The series highlighted the importance of Fairs to the communities they serve.

The District's dedicated team works tirelessly to launch The Big Fresno Fair event annually as a social and culturally diverse reflection of the community through exhibits, livestock, horse racing, quality entertainment and more. The Fair provides a link between urban and rural California, serving as a tool in educating Valley residents on our rich agricultural industry who might have otherwise not understood the importance or vastness of this commerce on our region.

Its mission is found in everything it does: *To educate, celebrate and have fun.*