

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Why is Larimer County seeking additional funding now? The county has absorbed over \$20 million in rising costs and implemented \$4 million in budget cuts for 2026. Despite these measures, revenues are not keeping pace with the cost of delivering essential services residents rely on daily, from wildfire protection to family crisis support.

How much additional revenue is actually needed? Needs vary by service area. Public safety alone requires \$5 million in new annual revenue. Wildfire preparedness needs \$1.7 million annually. Roads and bridges face a gap of up to \$26 million per year, and critical support services need at least \$2 million. Clean water infrastructure in the Big Thompson watershed requires at least \$35 million in total investment.

How would new funding be used for wildfire and disaster preparedness? An additional \$1.7 million per year would bring emergency preparedness staffing to needed levels. Funding would also protect the county's \$23.3 million emergency reserve, which could be wiped out by a single major event. For context, the Cameron Peak fire cost \$19 million and the 2013 flood exceeded \$115 million.

Why are public safety costs rising so dramatically? Public safety and criminal justice costs have increased more than \$71 million, or 72%, since 2017. This growth in costs has outpaced the revenue available to fund it. The \$5 million in new annual revenue being sought would help maintain safe streets and neighborhoods while also improving long-term justice outcomes.

What does drinking water have to do with wildfires? In Larimer County, our water sources are our forests, rivers, and reservoirs. Wildfire poses a direct contamination risk to these sources. The Big Thompson watershed, which serves most county residents including Fort Collins and Loveland, needs at least \$35 million to reduce that risk. Every \$1 invested now can save up to \$7 in future water rate increases and costly cleanups.

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What is the state of county roads and bridges? Many county roads and bridges need safety improvements, including some bridges over 50 years old. Rising costs have outpaced available funding, creating an annual gap of up to \$26 million just to keep up with current demand.

Who does the county serve through its critical support programs? The county provides support for cases involving abuse, neglect, housing, health, and financial crisis. The food assistance (SNAP) caseload grew from roughly 12,000 households in 2019 to more than 19,000 in 2025. Senior prevention services have already been eliminated, potentially affecting over 50,000 residents over age 60. Emergency programs often prevent worse outcomes for children, families, and neighbors.

How have recent federal and state funding changes affected County services? Reductions at the federal and state level, including impacts from H.R. 1 (the "Big Beautiful Bill Act"), have reduced funding the county previously relied on. At least \$2 million in new local revenue would help offset these losses and allow the county to continue serving the community at current levels.

How might new revenue be raised? The county is considering two primary options: a sales tax increase or a property tax increase. However, before any decision is made, Larimer County wants to hear directly from residents about which approach, or which tradeoffs, are preferred. Cutting services is also on the table as an alternative to new revenue.

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