County health officials breaking ground on $13.9 million laboratory expansion

Laboratory Director Dr. Errin Rider looked through the dust-covered windows at the newly installed steel beams poking up from the ground outside her office. The work is part of a $13.9 million expansion of the laboratory that Rider runs for Riverside University Health System-Public Health.

“"It’s not just an expansion of our capacity and capability," Rider said, referring to the project that will more than double the size of the existing lab, which was built in 1989. "We will be able to do work here now that in the past had to be sent someplace else."

More importantly, Rider said, the lab will be better able to serve the needs of the community.

Construction work started July 16 and is expected to be completed by December 2020. County officials will be holding a groundbreaking ceremony at 10 a.m. Wednesday (Sept. 18) at the Health Administration Building, 4065 County Circle Drive in Riverside.
The lab was built 30 years ago when county officials opened a complex of buildings that houses Public Health, Behavioral Health, Environmental Health, and the Department of Public Social Services.

Rider noted that the lab was designed with the technology at the time and much has changed in the three decades since the 4,700-square-foot facility was built. There have been substantial upgrades in technology, communication, and equipment that will now be part of the new lab. Samples that in the past were shipped to San Bernardino for testing and analysis will now be able to be done in the expanded lab, saving precious time.”

“The upgraded facilities will allow Public Health to better team with local hospitals, universities and private industry for research and expansion of services,” Rider said.

Public Health Director Kim Saruwatari said the expansion will allow the department to serve the needs of the community for years to come.

“The project will allow us to be on the cutting edge of technology,” Saruwatari said, “but the most important thing is that we can be more responsive to the needs of our residents and community partners.”

**Lab Facts:**

**Project:** Adding 5,100-square feet to existing lab.  
**Cost:** $13.9 million  
**Work started:** July 16, 2019  
**Estimated completion:** December 2020  
**Lab first built:** 1989  
**Ground breaking ceremony:** 10 a.m. on Sept. 18 at Health Administration Building, 4065 County Circle Drive in Riverside.