DATE: September 12, 2022

TO: Helen Robbins-Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Supervisor Joel Anderson

SUBJECT: Establishing a Memorandum of Understanding Between the County, the City of San Diego, the City of Santee and the San Diego River Park Foundation to Address Homeless Encampments and Activities Along the San Diego River

Thank you for your efforts to address our region’s homeless challenges and your commitment to protect and support all County residents. The County Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities (HSEC) has made many major accomplishments in the last year, and the County is making meaningful investments in helping the unsheltered population. Despite these efforts, our communities continue to experience challenges in managing regional homelessness. One specific example is the increased volume of encampments and people experiencing homelessness along the San Diego River. According to the most recent homeless census, the San Diego River Park Foundation reported that there are over 355 individuals experiencing homelessness along the riverbed with 43% of those in my district. After learning about the significance of the riverbed to our regional approach to solving homelessness, I would like to inquire if HSEC has considered coordinating with all the jurisdictions along the San Diego River on a joint plan of action.

To address the critical issue of homelessness, last May, I wrote to four East County cities, confirming the County’s commitment to entering into an MOU with them to develop a coordinated effort. Following this action, the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove and Santee formally signed the East County Cities Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), aimed at developing a joint plan of action to address the issue of homelessness in East County, including the unincorporated areas. The HSEC team did an incredible job of working with all our municipal partners to draft an MOU and I was thrilled to see the cities of El Cajon, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and Santee all agreed and signed on earlier this year.

County staff, and especially HSEC, have been instrumental in addressing the homeless crisis across the County by working with regional partners to focus its resources and personnel, including shelter and wrap-around services, to assist those experiencing homelessness.
Would an integrated and comprehensive approach of establishing an MOU, or similar concept, between the County of San Diego and partner jurisdictions along the San Diego River, including the City of San Diego, the City of Santee and the San Diego River Park Foundation and, assist HSEC staff in maximizing their investments in the unincorporated areas?

I understand that Item 9, on the Board of Supervisors September 14, 2022, meeting agenda looks to explore the creation of a contiguous river park trail for residents and visitors to enjoy this resource. This may provide an opportunity to explore coordination across jurisdictions to address homelessness, trash and fire risk reduction, and health and safety along the riverbed. Funding for this effort may be available through the $500 million in Encampment Resolution Grants in Governor Newsom’s *California Blueprint* package. This grant program may assist with clean-up efforts along the riverbed and provide services and support to those in need.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you in identifying actions to make significant progress in assisting those experiencing homelessness along the San Diego River.

cc: Helen Robbins-Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer
    Nick Macchione, Director, HHSA
    Sarah Aghassi, DCAO, LEUG
    Barbara Jimenez, Community Operations Officer, HSEC
    Dijana Beck, Acting Director, Office of Homeless Solutions