



JOEL ANDERSON

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SECOND DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 6, 2022

TO: Helen Robbins-Meyer, Chief Administrative Officer
Anthony Ray, Sheriff

FROM: Supervisor Joel Anderson 

SUBJECT: Request for Action to Address Ongoing Health and Safety Risks Associated with the North Magnolia Avenue Encampment

As a result of your support, the County has undertaken several major initiatives in the past year to intensify our efforts to address the region's ongoing homeless crisis. As you know, these actions included the creation of a new Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities to focus our efforts on preventing and reducing homelessness in San Diego County. Our compassionate approach to assist the region's unsheltered populations included Board direction to dedicate \$85 million in federal stimulus funding to homeless solutions, including housing, low-barrier shelters, acquisition of facilities and wraparound services, expanding the housing voucher and local rent subsidy program. We are also working to identify locations and concepts for safe parking lots in East County, develop flexible funding programs to address barriers to housing stability, and implement a shallow rent subsidy program focused on preventing our senior and veteran populations from becoming homeless.

Despite all of our efforts, the County continues to experience challenges in managing regional homelessness, including the recent proliferation of a homeless encampment located along North Magnolia Avenue in the unincorporated area of El Cajon.

Since March, we have focused numerous County resources and personnel, including the involvement of housing, mental health, law enforcement and public works staff, to assist those living in this encampment. With your assistance, the County has also held events, such as the East County Homeless Resource Fair which served as a "one-stop" shop for the unsheltered to receive resources such as hotel vouchers, hygiene kits, mental health, child support, employment and legal services, to help transition them to a permanent shelter and improved living condition. We also deployed a multitude of resources on April 29th, conducting a large-scale outreach event to bolster our efforts to transition individuals from the street to housing.

Although these intense efforts successfully connected 60 people with housing solutions, a significant number of individuals at this location have chosen to forego the assistance offered to them and to continue living along this public roadway. While remaining at this location, these unsheltered individuals will continue to be subject to serious risks beyond those of other homeless individuals, such as the potential to be injured or killed by vehicles traveling this roadway.

Other government agencies, such as the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), have been able to clear out similar homeless encampments along public right-of ways to protect both the individuals living there and the overall community. The actions of Caltrans have been supported by an April 27, 2022, decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, in the case of *Where Do We Go Berkeley v. Caltrans*. I am requesting that your teams take action similar to that used by Caltrans to address the ongoing health and safety risks present at the North Magnolia Avenue encampment.

I appreciate the cooperation and resources you have provided to date in an effort to resolve this situation in a positive and compassionate manner. However, it is imperative that the County now take the additional steps necessary to restore this location to one that is safe for all community members.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with you to eliminate the serious health and safety risks resulting from this situation.