



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, Nov. 12, 2024

City of San Diego Completes San Diego River Encampment Removal Project

SHELTER, HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES OFFERED TO EVERYONE WHO HAD BEEN STAYING IN RIVERBED NEAR I-5 AND FRIARS ROAD

SAN DIEGO – In advance of rising tides and rain, the City of San Diego has completed a four-month effort to provide temporary and long-term housing options to people experiencing homelessness and remove encampments from the San Diego River. Approximately 78 tons (156,000 pounds) of trash and debris were removed over the past week from a large encampment, which necessitated heavy equipment and boats to access.

City teams, working with nonprofit service providers, offered shelter and supportive services to everyone who had been staying in the encampment, as part of a state Encampment Resolution Fund (ERF) grant program to ensure stable housing and resources are available.

“This cleanup and its dramatic and positive outcomes are the product of months of outreach to with individuals experiencing homelessness along the river,” said San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria. “This was a multi-jurisdictional effort with many partners working in the riverbed to ensure stable options were available for everyone. Thanks to these partners and our hard-working City crews, we were able to shelter individuals who have been homeless for a significant period of time, which will undoubtedly save lives ahead of rain and tides that will cause the river to swell.”

As of Monday, Nov. 11, 48 people have moved into shelter or the City’s Safe Sleeping Program sites, at least eight people have been placed into permanent or long-term housing, and 13 more individuals are awaiting housing placement. During the cleanup, the San Diego Police Department’s Neighborhood Policing HOT (Homeless Outreach Teams) connected an additional six people to shelter options.

The encampment closure and abatement are the first of a [multi-phase approach](#) along the San Diego River to connect individuals to resources, remove encampments and address environmental concerns under the state ERF grant. The funds were secured last year, in collaboration with the County of San Diego, to support the operation and provide dedicated, ongoing financial assistance to ensure stable options are available for people leaving encampments.

Outreach and intensive housing efforts in this specific portion of the San Diego River (near the I-5 and Friars Road) began in July of this year. The City partnered with People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) for

outreach and Healthcare in Action for street medicine. The City also partnered with the San Diego Riverpark Foundation, which regularly works to support this area. Outreach teams took a client-centered approach, working with them to best meet their individual needs.

The expansion of the [Safe Sleeping Program](#) allowed for entire encampment communities to transition into supportive services.

“While the majority of individuals in this area engaged with outreach teams and accepted services, we know there is a handful who chose not to,” said Ketra Carter, Program Manager with the City’s Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department. **“These are human beings who, like you and me, have different needs or challenges in life. The City will continue working with our partners to create positive change for those who had been living in the riverbed.”**

City crews began the cleanup work on Tuesday, Nov. 5, and finished on Friday, Nov. 8. Caltrans and Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) teams were also in the area this week addressing encampments and debris on their respective property. [Unsafe Camping Ordinance](#) signs were posted in the area and additional park rangers will be deployed here.

“The City is committed to maintaining this area and not letting unsafe encampments re-emerge,” said Franklin Coopersmith, Deputy Director of the Environmental Services Department. **“We know it can be dangerous for individuals staying in this area during heavy rains, and we also do not want to allow debris to flow downriver into the ocean.”**

Previous ERF grant award funds have been used to successfully address encampments near [East Village](#) and [City Heights](#). The San Diego River encampment project includes a [supportive services contract](#) with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) San Diego to assist individuals as they transition out of encampments and into long-term housing.

Operational Timeline

- Early 2023 – City of San Diego designated San Diego River a priority area to address widespread encampments and waste.
- June 2023 – County of San Diego secured California ERF grant for entire San Diego River area ([City portion \\$3.6 million](#)).
- March 2024 – San Diego City Council [approved spending](#) of ERF grant funds for San Diego River area.
- July – October 2024 – Collaborative outreach effort at San Diego River encampment to provide case management, resource referrals, housing navigation assistance, and shelter connections.
- Nov. 1, 2024 – Unsafe Camping Ordinance signage posted near I-5 at Friars Road riverbed area.
- Nov. 4, 2024 – 24-hour abatement notices posted.
- Nov. 5 - 8, 2024 – Abatement of encampment and removal of waste and debris.

Agencies Involved

- City of San Diego Environmental Services Department
- City of San Diego Homelessness Strategies and Solutions Department
- San Diego Police Department Neighborhood Policing Division
- City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department
- San Diego Fire-Rescue Lifeguard Division
- County of San Diego Health and Human Services
- PATH (People Assisting the Homeless) San Diego

- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) San Diego
- Family Health Center's Community Harm Reduction Team
- Healthcare In Action
- San Diego Riverpark Foundation
- San Diego MTS
- Caltrans
- City Net nonprofit organization
- Feral Cat Coalition
- Alpha Project
- Urban Corps
- Clean Harbors Environmental Services



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