



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **Fires Near Riverside Neighborhood Spur Effort to Reduce Flammable Vegetation**

*City employees will build a bigger fire break between Santa Ana River and nearby neighborhood*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Recent fires in the Santa Ana River bottom that threatened the Bubbling Wells neighborhood adjacent to Fairmount Park have spurred a multi-pronged approach by the City of Riverside to create a larger fire break between the river and the neighborhood.

Workers from multiple City departments will mount a combined effort on Wednesday (12/7) to reduce the amount of vegetation, underbrush and other material capable of catching fire there, including some homeless encampments that have sparked some of the past fires. By reducing that “fire fuel load,” the City hopes to reduce the possibility of fire in the future for the safety of all residents.

“The Santa Ana River is a great asset for our community, but we must address the activities taking place there that are creating an undue amount of fire risk,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “It’s incumbent on the City to reduce that risk where we can for the safety of residents, and this effort will accomplish that.”

Workers from the Fire, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Community Services departments will clean up trash, debris and hazardous materials in the area. The effort also will clear out non-native grasses, grapevines, brush and low-hanging tree branches.

Prior to the work getting underway, City employees from the Code Enforcement Division of the Public Works Department and from the Homeless Outreach Team will reach out to people living in and around the work area to notify them of the pending effort and concerns for their safety. Riverside Police officers will be on hand the day the work is scheduled to escort people out of the work zone, if necessary.

“Our Homeless Outreach Team has worked steadily to encourage people living in the river bottom to leave that area and accept homeless services at the local shelter,” said Ward 1 City Councilman Mike Gardner, who represents the area. “This clean-up will continue that effort while also removing encampments that pose an especially high fire risk to the nearby neighborhood.”

In addition to reducing the fire risk, the Fire Department will use the project as a training opportunity for its staff. Riverside firefighters will work with two crews from CalFire to ensure potential fire fuels are removed.

“Fires in this area are dangerous for the surrounding neighborhood, but also for our firefighters who are called on to respond when a fire breaks out,” Fire Chief Michael Moore said. “This kind of proactive effort not only protects the neighbors, but also reduces the risk of fire personnel being injured in the future.”