



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS  
First District

JOEL ANDERSON  
Second District

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Third District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

**DATE:** April 26, 2022

**23**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**GENERAL SERVICES – APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE TO LEASE SPACE FOR THE PUBLIC DEFENDER IN EAST SAN DIEGO COUNTY (DISTRICT: 2)**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Department of the Public Defender (PD) has partially operated out of the East County Regional Center (ECRC) for over 20 years. However, as PD continues to grow, the current location no longer meets its operational needs to serve the East County region and there is not an opportunity to expand within the ECRC. PD has a need for additional space near the Superior Court East County Division to continue to provide the essential services to the community.

Today's request is for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to approve in principle the lease of office space for PD in East County. Upon successful negotiation of a lease agreement, staff will return to the Board to request approval of the transaction.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

#### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the proposed action is not an approval of a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15352 and 15378 (b)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Approve in principle the lease of office space for the Public Defender.
3. Authorize the Director, Department of General Services, to conduct a search for suitable sites, negotiate a lease and return to the Board for approval of the agreement.

### **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The mission of the Public Defender is to protect the rights, liberties, and dignity of all persons in San Diego County and maintain the integrity and fairness of the American Justice System by providing the finest legal representation in the cases they are entrusted with. An effective legal defense promotes more balanced and equitable criminal justice outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Today's action will allow clients of the Public Defender and their families to access assistance in the eastern portion of the County.

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**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the requested approval in principle to lease property for the Public Defender. The costs for lease will be determined during negotiation and will be provided when staff returns to the Board to request approval. The anticipated funding source for the proposed lease will be General Fund. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

The Department of the Public Defender (PD) consists of four separate divisions: the Primary Public Defender (PPD), the Alternate Public Defender (APD), the Multiple Conflicts Office (MCO) and the Office of Assigned Counsel (OAC), all ethically walled to avoid conflicts. The PD provides legal representation to people who are charged with a crime in state court and are financially unable to retain private counsel, and legal advice to all persons at arraignment except those who have retained private counsel. The PD also offers representation in some civil cases, such as mental health matters. PPD and APD occupy office space on two floors at the East County Regional Center (ECRC).

Due to population growth, demographics, and changes in legislation, PD has experienced an increase in case load and has added additional staff to accommodate this increase. It is estimated that PD needs approximately 10,400 square feet of space to accommodate new staff and there is no room to expand within the ECRC. Additional office space is needed near the Superior Court East County Division.

The Board of Supervisors (Board) is requested to approve in principle the lease of property to meet the current need for office space for PD. Upon successful negotiation of a lease agreement, staff will return to the Board to request approval of the transaction.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

The Board's approval in principle to lease office space for the Public Defender is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Board's action does not commit the County to a definite course of action with respect to any project. Once specific properties are identified for lease, staff will return to the Board with the appropriate environmental analysis.

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**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

The requested action supports the Justice Initiative of the County of San Diego's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan by supporting a department that provides focuses efforts to reduce disparities and disproportionality in the justice system by providing legal services to underprivileged persons.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER  
Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A