

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Erick L. Larsh  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**RE: City of Buena Park Response to Grand Jury Report – *How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?***

Dear Honorable Judge Larsh:

The City of Buena Park City Council Members have reviewed the Orange County Grand Jury's report entitled, *How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?* Below are the City of Buena Park's responses to the aforementioned report:

**F3            The County of Orange and cities within Orange County have been inconsistent in collaboration for support of shelters and services, which has resulted in missed opportunities to end homelessness.**

**Response:**    **The City of Buena Park disagrees wholly with this finding.** The collaboration between the County of Orange, Orange County Continuum of Care, and Orange County cities have resulted in the creation of navigation centers with associated services that better address the homelessness crisis.

In particular, over the past three years, the 13 cities that comprise the North Service Planning Area (N-SPA) and the County of Orange have worked together to construct, manage, and fund two Navigation Centers: one in Buena Park and one in Placentia. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the participating N-SPA cities have developed a partnership to ensure proper governance, secure funding, determine cost sharing, and enumerate operational responsibilities. Additionally, the two Navigation Centers have been a part of a first-of-its-kind shelter bed reservation management system app that provides real-time data on the availability of beds in any of the surrounding shelters. Cities in the N-SPA have also contributed to the Bridges at Kraemer county facility as well as funded homeless efforts in their respective cities. More specifically, the City of Buena Park has enhanced its homeless outreach to include a Homeless Outreach

Team within its Community Services Department and Homeless Liaison Officers in the Police Department, who work together to addresses homelessness from a more holistic approach rather than strictly enforcement methods.

**F4** **There are an insufficient number of rental units available to those existing Emergency Shelters, resulting in the majority returning to homelessness when leaving the shelters.**

**Response:** **The City of Buena Park agrees partially with the finding.** The County of Orange has countywide oversight of the Coordinated Entry System, which streamlines access and referrals to permanent housing opportunities. Often unhoused individuals and families, who are working toward a permanent housing option may experience delays and barriers in securing rental units due to a variety of factors (e.g. increased cost of living, lack of income/credit history, criminal backgrounds, etc.)

Due to these individualized barriers, the County has invested in programs with specialized staff to help successfully find and secure housing units. These efforts have resulted in housing-focused emergency shelters, increased housing navigation and unit identification programming, and enhanced supportive services to assist those in need to secure permanent housing.

At a local level, the City of Buena Park has a total of 710 affordable rental units and 129 affordable ownership units at various affordability levels. Additionally, there are a total of 178 affordable units in varying stages of entitlements and/or construction phases that will be added to the housing unit inventory in the next few years. Of these, 67 units are classified as permanent supportive housing (PSH) units. Although all of these current and proposed units are privately-owned and managed, the City has provided funding for several of these affordable housing developments.

**R4** **By July 1, 2024, the County of Orange and cities should collaborate to open facilities that can house people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues in a secure setting.**

**Response:** **The recommendation has been implemented.** The 2022 Housing Inventory Count identified 2,793 units of permanent supportive housing (PSH), which is long-term affordable housing paired with supportive services for people experiencing homelessness, who may have other barriers such as severe and persistent mental illness or addiction issues. PSH is prioritized for individuals experiencing the longest lengths of homelessness in Orange County and with high-service needs as a result of the disabling conditions they experience.

Since the County of Orange's adoption of the Orange County Housing Funding Strategy in 2018, and through the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, of which the City of Buena Park is a member, a total of 1,273 PSH units have been completed, are in the process of funding, or are under construction. The Housing Funding Strategy has established a target for the development of 2,700 new supportive housing by 2025. The development of new PSH and general affordable housing is an existing and ongoing collaborative effort between the County of

Orange, the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, and participating cities, including Buena Park.



**R5**            **By July 1, 2023, the County of Orange, cities, and CoC should collaborate to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County.**

**Response:** **The Recommendation has been implemented.** The County of Orange, the Orange County Continuum of Care, and local cities, including Buena Park, have been working together to encourage the development of affordable housing and PSH that supports the needs of people experiencing homelessness and accessing the system of care.

In 2019, the Orange County Housing Finance Trust (OCHFT) was established as a collaborative funding tool to facilitate the development of affordable housing and PSH units countywide. A total of 24 cities are now members in the Trust, including Buena Park, along with the County. To date, the OCHFT has provided funding commitments for 17 projects.

The CoC and the four public housing authorities (Orange County, Santa Ana, Garden Grove and Anaheim) have worked together to support the Emergency Housing Voucher program, which will provide a total of 1,041 special purpose vouchers for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, as identified by Orange County Continuum of Care service providers.

The County continues to allocate additional resources to subsidize housing opportunities for households that previously experienced homelessness and/or households experiencing homelessness. Since the adoption of the Housing Funding Strategy, the Orange County Board of Supervisors have authorized utilization of a combined 310 project-based Housing Choice, Mainstream and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing vouchers from the Orange County Housing Authority for permanent supportive housing developments throughout the Orange County. In addition, since 2018, the County of Orange has allocated over \$135.5 million in Mental Health Services Act funding for supportive housing development that is administered at both the state and local level. The County has also partnered with developers to apply jointly for other available funding sources such as No Place Like Home, Housing for a Healthy California, and Housing Accelerator funds.

In partnership with various cities, the County has worked with developers in identifying prospective sites that may be eligible for State of California's Homekey Program funding. To date, there has been over \$50 million in funding awarded to the County of Orange and to developer co-applicants for five motel conversions that will add 252 PSH units to the inventory available within the county.

Buena Park will continue to work with the County as well as the CoC in any available capacities to collaborate and encourage the development of affordable housing and permanent supportive housing as part of the system of care.

**R6**            **By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities, and CoC should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.**

**Response:**    **The recommendation has been implemented.** Since June 2020, County's Office of Care Coordination has worked to improve the homeless service delivery for transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The County provides oversight over the Coordinated Entry System and has worked to implement a separate process for transitional aged youth to be prioritized for available housing resources in the county. This has resulted in the implementation of a Transitional Aged Youth Registry, composed of youth participants experiencing homelessness in Orange County regardless of their household composition. Transitional aged youth service providers are invited to attend a collaborative case conferencing meeting to discuss individual cases, available housing, and dynamic prioritization through the Coordinated Entry System to ensure that the most vulnerable participants are receiving the most appropriate housing referrals.

In addition to this, the Office of Care Coordination began tracking outcomes in the form of transitional aged youth-focused dashboard to understand the housing needs and analyze trends. The Office of Care Coordination and the Orange County Continuum of Care have utilized this information to inform the implementation of housing resources and the solicitation of new housing resources specifically designed to meet the needs of the transitional aged youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Orange County.

Most recently, the Office of Care Coordination submitted a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program application for a funding opportunity from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed to reduce the number of transitional aged youths experiencing homelessness through a coordinated community approach.

Lastly, the State of California's Homeless, Housing Assistance and Prevention Program, which provides funding to the County, CoC, and cities of Anaheim and Santa Ana, require recipient jurisdictions to allocate a minimum percentage of the funding to create housing opportunities and resources for transitional-aged youth. This focused funding resource has proven helpful in the planning and design of a homeless service system that meets the needs of transitional aged youth.

Thank you for providing the City of Buena Park the opportunity to respond to this report.

Sincerely,



Aaron France  
City Manager

cc:        Buena Park City Council  
            Christopher G. Cardinale, City Attorney