



September 14, 2022

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

Re: Response to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury Report Titled "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

Dear Judge Larsh:

The City Council of the City of Newport Beach (City) has authorized me to submit the City's response to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury report entitled, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?" In accordance with California Penal Code 933.05(a) and (b), the following response addresses the report's findings and recommendations pertaining to the City of Newport Beach.

### **FINDINGS**

**Finding 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 Newport Beach disagrees partially with this finding. Newport Beach recognizes that the County of Orange and cities must further streamline communication and continue to work together to identify and implement projects to provide more shelter beds, develop more permanent supportive and affordable housing, and provide consistent homeless outreach and services across jurisdictional boundaries throughout the county. However, it is important to note that progress has been made over the past few years and a collaborative network is in place within the Central Service Planning Area (Central SPA). The City appreciates the cooperation occurring between Newport Beach, the County of Orange and neighboring communities.

The collaborative efforts between the County, the Orange County Continuum of Care and local cities have resulted in the creation of several shelters and services that better address unsheltered homelessness.

For example, the City of Newport Beach entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Costa Mesa to secure 20 of the 70 beds and on-site services in the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter. The shelter opened in April 2021 and since that time, the City of Newport Beach has sheltered an average of 18 people each night at this facility. Newport Beach and Costa Mesa staff members meet weekly to review shelter operations and discuss client case management.

The City communicates and coordinates routinely with County representatives as well. The City's full-time Homeless Coordinator participates in:

- County of Orange, Continuum of Care Board meetings and advisory committees
- County of Orange Point in Time County Advisory Committee
- Orange County Housing Finance Trust meetings
- County of Orange Commission to End Homelessness and other related meetings
- Mind OC, Be Well OC Learning Collaborative quarterly meetings.

The City's full-time Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) coordinates weekly with the Orange County Healthcare Agency Outreach Case Manager and attends bi-monthly, countywide, HLO meetings where law enforcement representatives discuss best practices and learn about other jurisdictions' shelter operations. Further, a County mental health specialist who serves as a member of the County's Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT), rides along with one of the Newport Beach Police Department's patrol officers. The PERT team member conducts evaluations of persons in the field and takes appropriate action, such as planning follow-up care.

The City also often coordinates with agencies such as OCTA, OCSD and other entities on cross-jurisdictional matters related to homelessness.

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

**Response:** The City of Newport Beach agrees with this finding. Individuals and families experiencing homelessness often encounter delays in securing appropriate permanent housing. Throughout the county, there is a lack of affordable units, particularly one-bedroom units and those designated for older adults.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 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 (F2)**

**Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The City of Newport Beach agrees that there are not yet enough housing options to assist people experiencing homelessness who struggle with mental illness or substance abuse issues.

The City is a member of the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, the joint powers authority comprised of the County of Orange and 24 cities, that share the goal of creating 2,700 permanent supportive housing units by June 30, 2025. Since the County's adoption of the Orange County Housing Funding Strategy and through the Orange County Housing Finance Trust, 1,273 permanent supportive housing units have been completed or are in progress. The City of Newport Beach is currently seeking a site to build up to 50 units of permanent supportive housing within the community.

The City of Newport Beach has also contracted with Be Well OC, which operates a mobile crisis response unit in the community. Be Well OC provides a dedicated team of mental health professionals that serves the Newport Beach community 7 days a week, 12 hours a day. The



Be Well team places people experiencing homelessness into shelters; provides direct referrals into appropriate treatment facilities such as its Orange campus, College Hospital and other available treatment facilities; and/or reunites them with estranged family. Be Well OC plans to open a second, 20-acre campus in the City of Irvine. It is anticipated that phase one of this facility will open in calendar year 2024.

**Recommendation 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 (FF3, F4, F5)**

**Response:** The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The City of Newport Beach understands the importance of permanent supportive housing and selected two developers to compete to develop a housing project with up to 50 units in Newport Beach. Each firm must identify a site and develop a concept to present to the City Council. The real estate market has been challenging, and as of August 2022, both firms are still working to identify a viable site. The City Council has committed \$3 million to help fund the development of permanent supportive housing projects.

Newport Beach also continues to seek opportunities to partner with other cities within the Central SPA on a permanent supportive housing project.

**Recommendation R6: By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities and CoC should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Age Youth (F6)**

**Response:** The recommendation has been implemented. Any Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) identified in Newport Beach enters the County's established Coordinated Entry System and the County then identifies housing for the TAY through a separate prioritized process.

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The City of Newport Beach continues to address homelessness through a proactive, coordinated approach that connects people to services and shelters with a goal of finding and maintaining permanent housing. The City of Newport Beach appreciates this opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations contained in the Orange County Grand Jury's report.

Sincerely,



Grace Leung  
City Manager

Cc: City Council  
Orange County Grand Jury