



## CITY OF RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA

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September 15, 2022

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

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, *How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?*

Dear Judge Larsh:

The City of Rancho Santa Margarita has reviewed the Orange County Grand Jury Report entitled, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?" As required by California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita is responding to the applicable findings and recommendations included within the report. Each of the findings and recommendations is listed below in italics, followed by the City's response.

### **Findings:**

*F1: South Orange County SPA cities lack low-threshold emergency shelters resulting in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets.*

Response: The City of Rancho Santa Margarita disagrees partially with this finding. While the South SPA has few low-threshold shelters, the 2022 Point-In-Time Count (PIT) demonstrates a reduction in the unsheltered homeless population as compared to the 2019 PIT. In total, the number of unsheltered homeless in Orange County has declined by 22.82%, and in the South SPA, there has been a decline of 21.56%. Therefore, the lack of shelters does not appear to directly result in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets.

*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 Rancho Santa Margarita partially disagrees with this finding. Although the report does not specify the inconsistencies which are believed to have resulted in missed opportunities, the County of Orange and the cities collaborate on a fairly consistent basis. Several new services and facilities have come online over the past several years as a result of that collaboration. Additionally, data or information by the Grand Jury relating to alleged inconsistencies would be needed in order to provide any further response.

**Mayor**  
Anne D. Figueroa

**Mayor Pro Tempore**  
Jerry Holloway

**Council Member**  
L. Anthony Beall

**Council Member**  
Carol A. Gamble

**Council Member**  
Bradley J. McGirr

**City Manager**  
Jennifer M. Cervantez

*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 Rancho Santa Margarita agrees with the finding. The Grand Jury Report provides information demonstrating the shortage of permanent housing in Orange County. Additionally, there is an insufficient number of affordable rental units available for all populations.

**Recommendations:**

*R1: By July 1, 2023, the CoC and County of Orange should leverage funding to persuade South Orange County cities to open a regional, low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Laguna Beach Friendship Shelter.*

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the CoC and Orange County as to their ability to leverage funding to open and operate a regional low-threshold shelter in the South SPA. The timeframe for implementation of this recommendation will be determined by the County in conjunction with the existing Emergency Shelters operations and Services Program which seeks regional coordination and collaboration across the three SPAs.

*R2: By July 1, 2023, South OC SPA cities should collaborate in siting and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter for homeless, in addition to the Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach.*

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the CoC and Orange County as to identifying and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter in the South SPA. The County currently funds low-threshold shelters in the North and Central SPA areas. The City of Rancho Santa Margarita will implement its portion of this recommendation by remaining open to continued dialogue and cooperation with the County during their analysis and effort to site and fund a low-threshold emergency shelter in the South SPA.

*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: This recommendation has been implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element. All cities and counties in Southern California are in the process of updating the State-mandated General Plan Housing Element. The City of Rancho Santa Margarita adopted a compliant Housing Element on August 24, 2022. Pursuant to State Housing Element Law, cities must plan for all housing types, including housing for people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues. Accordingly, cities have or are in the process of identifying sites where such facilities can be built. Funding for the construction and operation of such facilities would be the responsibility of other State or County government agencies and/or non-profits.

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*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.*

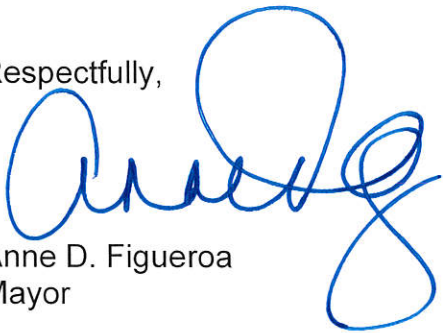
Response: This recommendation has been implemented. This recommendation is being implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element. All cities and counties in Southern California are in the process of updating the State-mandated General Plan Housing Element. The City of Rancho Santa Margarita adopted a compliant Housing Element on August 24, 2022. Pursuant to State Housing Element Law, cities must plan for all housing types, including housing for individuals and families exiting emergency shelters. Accordingly, cities have or are in the process of identifying sites where such facilities can be built and adopting policies which facilitate such development by the private sector and non-profits.

*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: This recommendation has been implemented. As described above for Recommendations 4 and 5, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita and all other jurisdictions in Southern California are adopting plans to accommodate and facilitate all housing types, including housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact Cheryl Kuta, Assistant City Manager/Development Services Director, at 949-635-1816 or via e-mail at [ckuta@cityofrsm.org](mailto:ckuta@cityofrsm.org).

Respectfully,



Anne D. Figueroa  
Mayor

Cc: Orange County Grand Jury  
700 Civic Center West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701