



City of
Laguna Woods

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Carol Moore
Mayor

September 19, 2022

Cynthia Conners
Mayor Pro Tem

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

Noel Hatch
Councilmember

Shari L. Horne
Councilmember

SUBJECT: City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

Ed H. Tao
Councilmember

Christopher Macon
City Manager

Dear Judge Larsh:

Thank you for the report and for the time and effort involved to prepare it.

Per the Orange County Grand Jury's request, and in accordance with California Penal Code Section 933, please find the City of Laguna Woods' response to the subject report attached. The response was approved by the Laguna Woods City Council on September 15, 2022.

If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please contact Christopher Macon, City Manager, at (949) 639-0512 or cmacon@cityoflagunawoods.org.

Sincerely,

Carol Moore
Mayor

Attachment: A – City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

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

ATTACHMENT A

City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?"

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 disagrees partially with this finding. The City agrees that the South Orange County Service Planning Area has fewer low-threshold emergency shelters than other service planning areas in Orange County, but disagrees that the availability of emergency shelters alone results in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets. The City notes that Orange County's 2022 Point in Time Count identified a total of 422 individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness within the South Orange County Service Planning Area, compared to 538 in 2019; a decrease of 21.56%.

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 disagrees wholly with this finding. The City has not inconsistently collaborated for support of shelters and services, and notes that the Grand Jury's report includes no examples of alleged inconsistency. The City is not in a position to opine on efforts by the County of Orange or other cities.

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 agrees with this finding.

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. (F1)

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. The City has no authority to direct the actions of the Orange County Continuum of Care or the County of Orange. The City is willing to collaborate with other South Orange County cities related to the opening of a low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless in the South Orange Service Planning Area.

R2. By July 1, 2023, South OC SPA cities should collaborate in siting and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless, in addition to the Friendship Shelter in Laguna Beach. (F2)

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. While the City is willing to collaborate with other South Orange County cities related to the siting and funding of a low-threshold emergency shelter for the homeless in the South Orange Service Planning Area, such an effort would require the participation of other cities, which the City cannot guarantee. The City is, therefore, unable to commit to implementing this recommendation. The City is also unclear as to whether the use of “collaborate” in this recommendation is meant to encompass planning for an emergency shelter or planning plus construction and operation. While the former may be possible by July 1, 2023 (provided other cities are similarly willing to collaborate), the latter is unlikely. The City permits emergency shelters by right in two zoning districts where adequate capacity is available to accommodate multiple year-round shelters (state law requires the City to permit emergency shelters by right in at least one zoning district where adequate capacity is available to accommodate at least one year-round shelter).

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 will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. While the City is willing to collaborate, as is appropriate and feasible, with the County of Orange and other cities on matters pertaining to opening facilities that can house people with severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues in a secure setting, such an effort requires the participation of the County of Orange and other cities, which the City cannot guarantee. The City is, therefore, unable to commit to implementing this recommendation. As required by state law, the City (a) considers supportive housing a residential use of property, subject only to those restrictions that apply to other residential dwellings of the same type in the same zoning district, and (b) permits supportive housing by right in all zoning districts where multifamily and mixed uses are permitted. Furthermore, per the County of Orange permanent supportive housing 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 experienced.

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. (F3, F4, F5)

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. While the City is willing to collaborate, as is appropriate and feasible, with the County of Orange and other cities to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County, such an effort requires the participation of the County of Orange and other cities, which the City cannot guarantee. The City is, therefore, unable to commit to implementing this recommendation. The City recently updated its General Plan Housing Element to provide for the accommodation of 1,196 new housing units, as well as incentives for, and other actions to encourage, the development of affordable housing. Both the City’s General Plan Housing Element and Zoning Code allow for the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County.

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. (F6)

Response: This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. While the City is willing to collaborate, as is appropriate and feasible, with the County of Orange and other cities to increase the number of housing opportunities for transitional aged youth, such an effort requires the participation of the County of Orange and other cities, which the City cannot guarantee. The City is, therefore, unable to commit to implementing this recommendation. However, the City recently updated its General Plan Housing Element to provide for the accommodation of 1,196 new housing units, as well as incentives for, and other actions to encourage, the development of affordable housing. Both the City's General Plan Housing Element and Zoning Code allow for the development of housing for transitional aged youth.