

32400 PASEO ADELANTO
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA 92675
(949) 493-1171
(949) 493-1053 FAX
www.sanjuancapistrano.org



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September 19, 2022

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

RE: City of San Juan Capistrano Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report Entitled “How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?”

Dear Honorable Judge Larsh:

Please accept this letter as the City of San Juan Capistrano’s response to the applicable findings and recommendations in the Grand Jury’s report entitled “How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?” The City was requested to respond to Findings F1, F3 and F4, and Recommendations R1, R2, R4, R5 and R6. Each of the findings and recommendations is listed below in italics, followed by the City’s response.

FINDINGS

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

City Response: The City of San Juan Capistrano disagrees partially with this finding. Although there are relatively few low-threshold shelters located in the South SPA, it is unclear what, if any, correlation exists between the number of low-threshold shelters and the increase or decrease of encampments and homeless individuals living on the streets. In fact, the 2022 Point-In-Time Count (PIT) demonstrates a reduction in the South SPA’s unsheltered homeless population as compared to the 2019 PIT despite the absence of new, low-threshold shelters added in the region.

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.

City Response: The City of San Juan Capistrano disagrees partially with this finding. The City of San Juan Capistrano actively collaborates with the County, neighboring cities and other stakeholders in an effort to address homelessness. In addition to new services and facilities throughout the county that have resulted from this collaboration over the past several years, the City of San Juan Capistrano has approved two projects that will result in 60 units of local Permanent Supportive Housing. Construction of one of those projects is substantially complete and ready for occupancy (10 PSH units within a larger affordable

development), and the other will break ground before the end of the year (50 PSH units at the city hall site). With this in mind, the City would need tangible data or information from the Grand Jury relating to inconsistencies in collaboration in order to provide any further response related to this finding.

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

City Response: The City of San Juan Capistrano agrees with the finding. Although the City has not independently researched this topic on a countywide or city-by-city basis, the Grand Jury Report credibly concludes that there is a shortage of permanent housing in Orange County. As mentioned above, the City is actively advancing two projects locally in partnership with affordable housing developers that will add 60 units of Permanent Supportive Housing in San Juan Capistrano. It is also important to note that there is an insufficient number of affordable rental units available for all populations, not just those individuals experiencing homelessness.

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.

City Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the County of Orange and CoC with respect to funding availability, with regard to both capital and ongoing operational costs associated with a low-threshold shelter in the South SPA, as well as financial and other impacts to South SPA cities. The timeframe for implementation of this recommendation is dependent upon the County of Orange, although the City of San Juan Capistrano remains open to participation in collaborative discussions on this matter in partnership with the County and other South SPA cities.

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.

City Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the County of Orange and CoC with regard to identifying and funding a low-threshold emergency shelter in the South SPA (see Response to R1, above). It is the City's understanding that the County currently funds low-threshold shelters in the North and Central SPA areas. The City of San Juan Capistrano remains open to participation in collaborative discussions relative to a low-threshold shelter in the South SPA, in partnership with the County and other South SPA cities.

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.

City Response: This recommendation has been implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element. 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. In partnership with affordable housing developers, the City of San Juan Capistrano has collaborated to site, entitle and partially fund two separate projects that will result in 60 units of Permanent Supportive Housing. Permanent Supportive Housing, or PSH, is long-term affordable housing provided in conjunction with

supportive services for people experiencing homelessness (or at risk of experiencing homelessness) or that may have other challenges, such as mental illness and addiction issues. Construction of one of those projects is substantially complete and ready for occupancy (10 PSH units within a larger affordable development), and the other will break ground before the end of the year (50 PSH units at the current city hall site).

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.

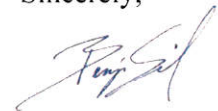
City Response: This recommendation has been implemented. This recommendation is being implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element, which requires cities to plan for all housing types, including housing for individuals and families exiting emergency shelters. Moreover, as mentioned in the response to Recommendation 4 above, the City of San Juan Capistrano has collaborated to site, entitle and fund two separate projects that will result in 60 units of Permanent Supportive Housing. One of those projects, known as “The Groves,” will open to residents later this year and includes 10 PSH units for seniors. The other project, in partnership with Jamboree Housing, will break ground later this year and will include 50 PSH units (non-age restricted) along with a new city hall building immediately adjacent. That project is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

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.

City Response: This recommendation has been implemented. As described in responses to Recommendations 4 and 5 above, as part of the Housing Element process the City of San Juan Capistrano (and all other jurisdictions in Southern California) are adopting plans to accommodate and facilitate all housing types, including housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (949) 443-6314.

Sincerely,



Benjamin Siegel
City Manager

cc: Orange County Grand Jury, 700 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92701
San Juan Capistrano City Council