



CITY OF ORANGE

Office of Mayor

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September 21, 2022

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

Re: City of Orange Response to Grand Jury Report: How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness

Dear Honorable Judge Larsh:

The following is the City of Orange's response to the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury's Report, *How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness*. The City of Orange was asked to respond to Findings F3 and F4 and Recommendations R4, R5, and R6.

FINDINGS:

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's Response: The City disagrees partially with the finding, insofar as it applies to the City of Orange. The City, as part of the North Service Planning Area (SPA), has been proactive in its collaboration with the County and other cities to promote shelters and services yielding tangible results. The thirteen cities in the North SPA jointly fund two regional full-service Navigation Centers. In addition to 250 beds, services provided include health resources, job skill training, and the ability to reconnect with lost family. This North SPA partnership is guided by the proven Continuum of Care (CoC) model, which includes a process for recognizing issues and concerns, providing resources, and then offering a path towards re-integration. The City also partnered with HomeAid of Orange County to develop the Orange Family Care Center to provide services for families to obtain permanent housing and Be Well OC to provide services to individuals struggling with mental illness or substance abuse. The City Police Department's Homeless Engagement, Assistance & Resource Team (HEART) program has also been operating since 2013. HEART Officers engage daily with the City's local unhoused individuals, working with them one-on-one to help facilitate re-integration. Comparing 2019 and 2022 results of the County of Orange *Everyone Counts 2022 Point in Time Summary*, there is an 11.72% increase in sheltered individuals in the North SPA. Additionally, the count also concluded there is a 30.26% decrease from 2019 to 2022 in individuals identified as Unsheltered in

the North SPA. Specifically in the City, the decrease in Unsheltered is 30.57%. The City continues collaboration efforts to support shelters and services.

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.

City's Response: The City disagrees partially with the finding, insofar as it implies a failure to encourage and approve housing available to those exiting Emergency Shelters. The City has a long history of encouraging the development of affordable housing projects and several successful affordable projects have resulted. In fact, currently, there are several proposals for rental units available to those exiting Emergency Shelters. Specifically, Valencia Garden (637 W. Struck Avenue) is being built upon land sold to the developer by the City and constitutes 62-units of affordable housing, of which 20 units will be set aside specifically for formerly unhoused families. Additionally, Katella Terrace (1249 E. Katella Avenue) will be built upon land owned by the City and leased and managed by an affordable housing developer. Katella Terrace constitutes 74-units of senior affordable housing. Finally, the City is currently working with an affordable housing developer on the Villa St. Joseph project (480 S. Batavia), constituting 50-units of affordable housing, of which 18 would be supportive housing reserved for individuals that are homeless or at-risk of homelessness who are Mental Health Services Act eligible earning at or below 30% Area Median Income (AMI). 31 units of this project would be reserved for low-income seniors earning at or below 60% AMI, and 1 managerial unit. The City is also proud to have approved the La Veta Affordable Housing Project, constituting 6-units of affordable housing, which will specifically serve those exiting HomeAid Orange County's Family Care Center. Looking to the future, with funding from the County and/or State to assist the private sector development, the City will continue to support the development of rental units available to those exiting Emergency Shelters.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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)

City's Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The Be Well Orange Campus (265 S. Anita Dr.) features mental health crisis stabilization services, the County's first sobering center, and quality residential care for both severe and persistent mental illness and addiction issues in a secure setting. The Be Well Orange Campus is a 60,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility with 93 beds and the capacity to provide mental health and substance abuse services to about 100 people each day. Residents of Orange County can receive care, regardless of what insurance they have, as care may be covered through Medi-Cal.

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)

City's Response: This recommendation has been implemented. The City along with the other North SPA cities fund two Navigation Centers. These navigation centers, located in Buena Park and Placentia, provide 250 beds for the North SPA. The City continues to collaborate to foster creative, comprehensive and compassionate solutions to help the unhoused community. The City established two nonprofit organizations, Orange Senior Housing in 1981 and the Orange Housing Development Corporation in 1990 to promote the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting emergency shelters. These organizations exist today and since 1985, together with the City, have developed 1,671 units of affordable housing. The City's focus on quality, well-maintained affordable housing projects ensures the dignity of residents as well as continued community support for affordable housing for persons exiting emergency shelters.

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)

City's Response: This recommendation has been implemented. According to the May 2022 *Everyone Counts 2022 Point in Time Summary*, 126 Sheltered Transitional Aged Youth and 109 Unsheltered Transitional Aged Youth were counted countywide. The City supports regional efforts to address the need to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth. The City supports the County as it is recruiting for the Youth Action Board (YAB). The YAB is an advisory body comprised of Transitional Aged Youth who have experienced unstable housing and/or homelessness. This advisory body will inform the CoC Board about their unique experiences and share recommendations and feedback regarding programs and services, all of which will help the City understand the specific needs of the young unhoused. As housing opportunities in the City are increased through the development of affordable housing such as Valencia Gardens, Katella Terrace, Villa St. Joseph, and La Veta Affordable Housing, the information and input from the County, the CoC, and the YAB regarding the particular requirements for these youth will be incorporated into the affordable housing planning model. Additionally, with funding from the County and/or State, the City will continue to support the County in efforts to increase housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.

Thank you for your service and efforts on behalf of the City of Orange. We hope this response will be helpful.

Sincerely,


Mark A. Murphy
Mayor, City of Orange

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