



November 22, 2022

The Honorable Erick L. Larsh
Presiding Judge of the Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, California, 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 Irvine has authorized the following responses to the 2021-2022 Orange County Grand Jury report titled “How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?” In accordance with Penal Code section 933.05(a) and (b), the City provides the following responses to certain of the report’s findings and recommendations.

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 Irvine disagrees partially with this finding. Irvine agrees that the County of Orange and cities within the county must maintain communication and work collaboratively to identify and implement projects to provide support of shelters and services. To that end, the City has and will remain willing to meet with the County and with other cities on these issues.

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 Irvine disagrees partially with this finding. Irvine agrees that there are an insufficient number of available affordable rental units, supportive housing rental units, transitional housing rental units, and housing vouchers for people exiting Emergency Shelters. The City also believes that a greater allocation of qualified Mental Health resources would facilitate successful shelter exist from homelessness into housing.

The City of Irvine is committed to the development of affordable rental housing for a range of households, including those exiting homelessness. There are over 5,000 deed-restricted affordable housing units located in Irvine. Unfortunately, less than three percent of those units are vacant at any one time and even the affordable rents often exceed the amount a homeless person can pay. The County’s Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program is making an impact.

The City is also collaborating with Families Forward, utilizing ESG-CV funds, to introduce a landlord incentive program that offers up-front cash incentives and unit turnover reimbursements to landlords accepting EHV households.

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: The City of Irvine agrees with this recommendation, noting that State and Federal financial support is needed to build and safely operate such facilities. Currently, the Be Well Mobile Crisis Response Team operates in Irvine at least six days a week, serving individuals and families who are housed, unhoused, or housing insecure. The counselors address immediate crises and provide linkages to basic needs resources, behavioral health care, physical health care, substance abuse treatment, and shelter.

Recommendation R5: By July 1, 2023, the County of Orange, cities and Continuum of Care should collaborate to encourage the development of housing affordable to individuals exiting the emergency shelters in Orange County. (F3, F4, FS)

Response: The City of Irvine agrees with this recommendation. Orange County and its cities need increased State and Federal financial support to build affordable permanent supportive housing and to fund the full range of services that households need to successfully transition out of homelessness.

Recommendation R6: By December 1, 2022, the County of Orange, cities and Continuum of Care should collaborate to increase the number of housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth. (F6)

Response: The City of Irvine agrees with this recommendation. Local educational systems should also be included in these collaborations. State and Federal financial support is needed to fund a cross-sector approach to financing, building, and operating affordable housing and providing associated programs targeted toward the unique needs of Transitional Aged Youth.

We trust this response from the City of Irvine will be filed with the Grand Jury so that anyone reading the Grand Jury Report will be able to evaluate it in light of Irvine's response set forth above. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Farrah N. Khan
Mayor

cc: Irvine City Council
Orange County Grand Jury