



City of  
Laguna Woods

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Cynthia S. Conners  
Mayor

August 18, 2023

Noel Hatch  
Mayor Pro Tem

The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez  
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court  
700 Civic Center Drive West  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Shari L. Horne  
Councilmember

Annie McCary  
Councilmember

Carol Moore  
Councilmember

**SUBJECT: City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Welcome to the Neighborhood – Are cities responsibly managing the integration of group homes?"**

Christopher Macon  
City Manager

Dear Judge Hernandez:

Thank you for the report and for the time and effort involved in preparing 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 August 16, 2023.

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](mailto:cmacon@cityoflagunawoods.org).

Sincerely,

Cynthia S. Conners  
Mayor

Attachment: A – City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Welcome to the Neighborhood – Are cities responsibly managing the integration of group homes?"

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

## ATTACHMENT A

City of Laguna Woods' Response to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report,  
"Welcome to the Neighborhood – Are cities responsibly managing  
the integration of group homes?"

### FINDINGS

**F1.** Group homes too close to one another contribute to the problems associated with overconcentration.

**Response:** The City of Laguna Woods agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that an overconcentration of group homes may cause problems.

**F2.** Common nuisances are more likely and disruptive when sober living homes are concentrated in a small geographic area of a neighborhood.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that an overconcentration of group homes may cause nuisances.

**F3.** Some cities have successfully addressed and informed community members about the challenges faced in regulating group homes.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that some cities have successfully addressed and informed community members about the challenges faced in regulating group homes.

**F4.** Community satisfaction was minimal when cities took the traditional public comment approach towards addressing community complaints.

**Response:** The City disagrees wholly with this finding, but only because the City has no direct experience with group homes or levels of community satisfaction in other cities.

**F5.** Cities are not utilizing police, fire, and code enforcement complaints as a means of locating and tracking Group Homes.

**Response:** The City disagrees wholly with this finding, but only because the City has no direct experience with group homes or locating and tracking systems used in other cities.

**F6.** Cities are inhibited from enacting and enforcing ordinances due to fears over the potential cost of litigation.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with

group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that enforcement can be subject to costly litigation.

**F7.** Several cities have created an ordinance that requires a ministerial permit or registration to operate a group home, however many of these cities do not enforce their ordinances.

**Response:** The City disagrees partially with this finding, but only because the City has no direct experience with group homes or enforcement practices in other cities. It is true that some cities have created ordinances that require ministerial permitting or registration to operate a group home.

**F8.** City and County officials are deterred from regulating group homes by California Housing and Community Development's housing element approval process.

**Response:** The City disagrees wholly with this finding, but only because the City has no direct experience with group homes or how the California Department of Housing and Community Development's housing element review process relates.

**F9.** Cities have historically strategized and acted independently in addressing group home challenges and solutions.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that cities often strategize and act independently in addressing group home challenges and solutions.

**F10.** Well-operated group homes can integrate smoothly into neighborhoods.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, it is likely that well-operated group homes can integrate smoothly into neighborhoods.

**F11.** There is a lack of regulatory oversight for the health and safety of residents of unlicensed group homes.

**Response:** The City agrees with this finding. While the City has no direct experience with group homes, our understanding of the subject and experiences in other cities supports that there is an insufficient level of effective regulatory oversight for the health and safety of residents of unlicensed group homes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**R1.** Orange County cities and the County of Orange should address citizen concerns regarding group homes by providing an opportunity for an open dialog where an interdisciplinary panel of subject matter experts can share with attendees the challenges cities are facing in the management of group homes. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F3, F4)

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. No group homes are currently operating in Laguna Woods, the City is unaware of any previous group homes that operated in Laguna Woods, current private property ownership in the City is such that the establishment of group homes is unlikely, and the City has not received concerns from residents regarding group homes. That said, the City is open to participating in a countywide dialog regarding group home challenges as recommended.

**R2.** By December 31, 2024, Orange County cities and the County of Orange should collaborate in their efforts to create ordinances for the regulation of group homes, including the development of model ordinances. (F6, F7, F9)

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. No group homes are currently operating in Laguna Woods, the City is unaware of any previous group homes that operated in Laguna Woods, current private property ownership in the City is such that the establishment of group homes is unlikely, and the City does not believe that there is a need for additional regulation within Laguna Woods at this time, although we acknowledges that such a need may exist in other cities. To that end, the City is open to collaborating with other jurisdictions to create ordinances for the regulation of group homes, including the development of model ordinances, as recommended.

**R3.** Orange County cities and the County of Orange should pool resources for defense of lawsuits challenging group home ordinances. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F6, F8, F9)

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. No group homes are currently operating in Laguna Woods, the City is unaware of any previous group homes that operated in Laguna Woods, current private property ownership in the City is such that the establishment of group homes is unlikely, and the City does not believe there is a need to spend City funds defending lawsuits challenging group home ordinances adopted and enforced by other Orange County cities or the County of Orange.

**R4.** The County of Orange and Orange County cities should create a Task Force that includes representatives from OC cities, unincorporated areas, and other entities as appropriate and charge it with the responsibility of developing a plan to generate awareness among State legislators and regulators of the need for improved regulations and management standards to ensure health and safety for Group Home residents. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F2, F10, F11)

**Response:** This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. While the City is willing to participate in a Task Force as recommended, such an effort would require the participation of the County of Orange and other Orange County cities, which the City cannot guarantee. The City is, therefore, unable to commit to implementing this recommendation.

**R5.** Orange County cities and the County of Orange should modify code enforcement report data collection forms to include a searchable field that enables the identification of a residence operating as a group home. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F5, F7, F11)

**Response:** This recommendation has been implemented prior to the date of this Grand Jury report. The City's code enforcement data collection forms currently used for other code enforcement purposes are searchable by address, which would enable the identification of a residence operating as a group home. There has not yet been a need for such searchability as no group homes are currently operating in Laguna Woods and the City is unaware of any previous group homes that operated in Laguna Woods.