



September 21, 2022

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

Mayor
Robert Pequeño

Mayor Pro Tem
Doug Cirbo

Council Members
Neeki Moatazedi
Mark Tetterer
Scott Voigts

City Manager
Debra DeBruhl Rose

Dear Judge Larsh:

Subject: Response to Orange County Grand Jury Report, *How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?*

The City of Lake Forest has reviewed the Orange County Grand Jury Report entitled, "How is Orange County Addressing Homelessness?" The City is responding to the findings and recommendations included within the report. Each of the findings and recommendations is listed below in italics, followed by the City's response.

Findings:

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

Response: Partially disagree with this finding. The 2022 Point-In-Time Count (PIT) demonstrates a 21.56% reduction in the unsheltered homeless population as compared to the 2019 PIT. Based on this data, a lower number of shelters does not appear to directly result in more homeless encampments and individuals living on the streets.

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: Partially disagree with this finding. Although the report does not specify the inconsistencies which are believed to have resulted in missed opportunities, the County of Orange and the cities collaborate on a fairly consistent basis. Several new services and facilities have come online over the past several years as a result of that collaboration. Additionally, data or information by the Grand Jury relating to alleged inconsistencies would be needed in order to provide any further response.

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: Agree with the finding. The Grand Jury Report provides information demonstrating the shortage of permanent housing in Orange County. Additionally, there is an insufficient number of affordable rental units available for all populations.



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.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the CoC and Orange County.

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.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis by the CoC and Orange County as to funding programs and projects aimed at reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness in the South SPA, which may include funding a low-threshold emergency shelter, permanent supportive housing, and other measures that provide housing. Lake Forest agrees to the collaborative approach to addressing the issue of homelessness.

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.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element. All cities and counties in Southern California are in the process of updating the State-mandated General Plan 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. Accordingly, cities have or are in the process of identifying sites where such facilities can be built. Funding for the construction and operation of such facilities would be the responsibility of other State or County government agencies and/or nonprofits.

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.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. This recommendation is being implemented by local cities and the County through the Sixth Cycle Housing Element. All cities and counties in Southern California are in the process of updating the State-mandated General Plan Housing Element. Pursuant to State Housing Element Law, cities must plan for all housing types, including housing for individuals and families exiting emergency shelters. Accordingly, cities have or are in the process of identifying sites where such facilities can be built and adopting policies which facilitate such development by the private sector and nonprofits. Further, the City has collaborated with the County of Orange, nonprofits, and the private sector to build affordable housing in Lake Forest,

Hon. Erick Larsh
September 21, 2022
Page 3

including two projects currently under construction: the Mountain View Housing Project with 71 affordable units, including 8 permanent supportive units, and the Portola Center South Affordable Senior Housing Project, with 58 affordable units for seniors. In addition, the Meadows Senior Housing Project comprised of 64 affordable units, including 7 permanent supportive units, is also in development.

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.

Response: This recommendation has been implemented. As described above for Recommendations 4 and 5, Lake Forest and all other jurisdictions in Southern California are adopting plans to accommodate and facilitate all housing types, including housing opportunities for Transitional Aged Youth.

Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please contact me at (949) 461-3400, or via e-mail at drose@lakeforestca.gov.

Respectfully,

City of Lake Forest

Robert Pequeno
Mayor 

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