



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY EXECUTIVE

File #: 22-886

Board Meeting Date: 11/15/2022

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Michael Callagy, County Executive

Subject: Board of Supervisors' Response to 2021-22 Civil Grand Jury Report Entitled "County's Got a Strategic Plan but I Still Ain't Got No Home"

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2021-22 Civil Grand Jury Report Entitled "County's Got a Strategic Plan but I Still Ain't Got No Home".

BACKGROUND:

On August 15, 2022, the 2021-2022 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury issued the Report. Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(c), the Board of Supervisors must submit to the Honorable Judge Amarra A. Lee comments on the findings and recommendations in the Report pertaining to the matters over which the Board has decision-making authority no later than November 15, 2022.

DISCUSSION:

The Grand Jury made four findings and four recommendations in the Report. Staff has reviewed the Report and drafted the following recommended responses for the Board's consideration:

FINDINGS

Finding 1:

The 2016 Strategic Plan did not target programs addressing the large population of chronically homeless among the homeless population, diminishing the ability of the plan to deal with that group effectively.

Response: The County *partially agrees* with this finding. The 2016 Strategic Plan set forth a broad commitment to "create a system to end homelessness." While this commitment included strategies and best practices that sought to assist the *entire* population of individuals within San Mateo County experiencing homelessness, including those experiencing chronic homelessness, the 2016 Strategic Plan did not articulate separate strategies specifically tailored to address the chronically homeless subpopulation.

Finding 2:

The 2016 Strategic Plan failed to establish baseline numbers for important metrics, and failed to set quantified targets for what the related improvements should be, making it difficult to assess the ultimate effectiveness of this plan.

Response: The County *agrees* with this finding.

Finding 3:

Once homeless persons enter permanent housing or permanent supportive housing programs, the rate of return to homelessness is low, indicating that these programs can be an effective way to reduce homelessness.

Response: The County *agrees* with this finding.

Finding 4:

The absence of updated housing statistics on the Department of Housing website for any period after 2017 makes it difficult for the public to find relevant information on a matter of public interest.

Response: The County *partially agrees* with this finding. The specific data referenced was provided by a third-party vendor that went out of business in 2017, at which time the Department of Housing stopped updating the information on its website. As part of the 2022 launch of new County websites, the Department of Housing stopped citing this data, given it was, by that point, five (5) years old. In the meantime, however, the Department has shifted its data presentation to focus on other resources more commonly requested by members of the public, including a set of dashboards tracking the County's progress in financing and producing affordable housing, as well as median rent and income data, which is updated annually by the State's Tax Credit Allocation Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

The Grand Jury recommends that, by March 31, 2023, the Board of Supervisors should consider directing Human Services Agency staff to include programs targeting the chronically homeless in its forthcoming strategic plan on homelessness.

Response: *The recommendation has already been implemented.* The County's new strategic plan on homelessness for July 2022 through June 2025 ("2022-2025 Strategic Plan") includes strategies targeting individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, such as:

- Permanently housing individuals experiencing homelessness by increasing the capacity of the homeless crisis response system to provide housing solutions;
- Identifying innovative housing solutions for populations that have the greatest barriers to housing-e.g., individuals with complex health needs, older adults, those with a criminal history, and undocumented individuals;
- Continuing and enhancing Housing First approaches in permanent housing programs-

e.g., including low barriers to entry, voluntary service participation, and housing-focused services and supports;

- Maintaining and expanding permanent housing voucher programs for individuals experiencing homelessness-e.g., Continuum of Care (COC) funded Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV), Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), Family Unification Program (FUP), Mainstream Vouchers;
- Introducing more flexibility to transition individuals to different levels of support or, as appropriate, phase out support; and
- Creating voucher programs with simplified eligibility criteria and processes (e.g., EHV).

Recommendation 2:

The Grand Jury recommends that, by March 31, 2023, the Board of Supervisors should consider directing Human Services Agency staff to include quantifiable metrics to measure progress toward its goals in its forthcoming strategic plan on homelessness.

Response: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented* . By March 31, 2023, staff will recommend that the Board direct Human Services Agency staff to include quantifiable metrics to measure progress toward its goals. The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan includes goals and desired results, and the Human Services Agency will develop a template for strategic plan progress updates that will call for metrics and narrative updates on the status of achieving those goals/results.

Recommendation 3:

The Grand Jury recommends that, by March 31, 2023, the Board of Supervisors should consider directing Human Services Agency staff to make specific recommendations on how to increase inventory of permanent housing and permanent supportive housing.

Response: *The recommendation has already been implemented.* The Board has already directed County staff to increase the inventory of permanent housing and permanent supportive housing. A non-exhaustive list of recent initiatives aimed at addressing these goals, most of which are reflected in the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, include:

- Aggressively leveraging the County’s Affordable Housing Fund (which consists of a combination of local sources like Measure A/K and State sources managed locally, such as HHC, MHSA, NPLH, PLHA) to continually add new units targeted to extremely low-income (ELI) households and people experiencing homelessness;
- Securing funding to acquire and rehabilitate motels for permanent supportive housing through future Project Homekey rounds;
- Prioritizing the use of County-owned land for affordable housing production targeting homeless households;
- Using the Housing Authority’s HCV project-based authority to incentivize development

of new units for people experiencing homelessness;

- Creating a new Local Operating Subsidy Program to provide a local source of rental and services subsidies targeted to homeless households;
- Exploring innovative construction methods and housing models, such as modular units, to help reduce construction costs and stretch the County's limited resources even further;
- Identifying funding sources to develop housing for specific populations impacted by homelessness-particularly older adults in need of medical and behavioral health support; and
- Pursuing and obtaining new sources of available federal rental subsidies, with particular attention to those targeted to homeless and at-risk households (e.g., Emergency Housing Vouchers, Mainstream, VASH, Permanent Supportive Housing, Foster Youth Independence, etc.).

Recommendation 4:

The Grand Jury recommends that, by December 31, 2022, the Board of Supervisors should direct the Department of Housing to update the statistical housing information on its website.

Response: *The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented.* This recommendation is included in the Department of Housing's five-year strategic plan and is in process. In 2020, the Department of Housing created its housing production and finance dashboards, both of which have since been expanded. As part of the County's 2022 new website launch, the Department of Housing is convening stakeholder discussions to determine what additional sources of information would be particularly helpful. While these website updates will be a continual process, the Department of Housing intends to complete this current round of updates by June 2023.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the acceptance of this report.