

CITY OF SANTA MARIA  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

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August 8, 2007

The Honorable Judge Rodney Melville  
Superior Court  
312-M East Cook Street  
Santa Maria, CA 93455-5165

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury  
Attention: Foreperson  
1100 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Honorable Judge Melville & Grand Jury Foreperson:

The 2006-07 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury recently released a report entitled *Affordable Housing in Santa Barbara County: Myth or Reality?* which names the City of Santa Maria as an affected agency. As such, the City is required to respond to applicable findings and recommendations within 90 days from the date of receipt.

The City of Santa Maria would like to acknowledge the effort of the Grand Jury in preparation of the following report.

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY: MYTH  
OR REALITY?

**Finding 3:** Funding to subsidize affordable housing is limited and not keeping pace with increased costs.

**City Response:** The City agrees with the finding.

**Finding 4:** Housing Elements utilize zoning capacity and other policies to meet affordable housing requirements. However, construction of actual units is not required. Jurisdictions incur no penalty if no affordable housing units are built.

**City Response:** The City disagrees partially with the finding as the Housing Elements are not limited to zoning capacity to meet affordable housing requirements. Zoning must be consistent with a General Plan. The subject finding would seem to imply the reverse is true. The disconnect with Housing Element statutes and the subject finding appears to result because cities do not build homes. The finding that jurisdictions incur no penalty if affordable housing units are not built is not entirely accurate either. Cities may not qualify for housing grant programs if a Housing Element is not certified. If affordable units are not built, it will be challenging for a jurisdiction to achieve certification in the future.

**Finding 5:** Affordable housing programs vary across jurisdictions but are not always matched to local needs.

**City Response:** The City disagrees partially with the finding. While housing programs may vary across jurisdictions, the City is not in a position to judge whether or not other jurisdictions match their local housing needs.

**Finding 6:** There are varying degrees of public and local government support for affordable housing programs across jurisdictions.

**City Response:** The City agrees with the finding.

**Finding 7:** Regional Housing Needs Assessment goals have not been met in most jurisdictions; there is a marked shortfall in the low-income and very-low-income categories. Guadalupe is the sole exception.

**City Response:** The City agrees with the finding.

**Finding 8:** Santa Barbara County Association of Governments does not monitor or acknowledge jurisdictional successes in meeting affordable housing goals. There is minimal effort to identify steps and patterns leading to success and to share this information with other jurisdictions.

**City Response:** The City agrees with the finding.

**Finding 9:** Non-profit organizations such as the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, People's Self-Help Housing Corporation and Habitat for Humanity play an important role in affordable housing programs.

**City Response:** The City agrees partially with the finding insofar as the aforementioned agencies have played an important role in the housing programs in respective jurisdictions, but the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara has no role in the housing programs in Santa Maria.

**Recommendation 1:** Since there is more than one way to develop and administer affordable housing programs, jurisdictions should focus on meeting local housing needs rather than relying on one type of program (e.g., owner-occupied and rental vs. rental only).

**City Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable. It assumes that it takes more than one type of affordable housing program to meet local housing needs, which is not necessarily accurate. Given the correct set of circumstances one or more housing programs could meet a jurisdiction's needs and this recommendation assumes that this cannot happen.

**Recommendation 2:** At least annually, each jurisdiction should hold informational community meetings to explain all aspects of its affordable housing program.

**City Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented because the frequency of such informational meetings and the type of information to be shared should be based on the needs of each respective jurisdiction and best left to each jurisdiction's discretion.

**Recommendation 3:** Jurisdictions should focus on developing more very-low-income and low-income housing to meet Regional Housing Needs Assessment goals.

**City Response:** The recommendation requires further analysis since, with the exception of the City of Guadalupe, no other City is meeting RHNA goals in the very-low-income and low-income category. Furthermore, a better assessment of why this goal has not been met is needed before any further policy direction is formulated. It should be noted, however, the City of Santa Maria is not in the business of building houses and is therefore limited in its ability to achieve the RHNA goal and that no other City (with the exception of the City of Guadalupe) meets these goals.

**Recommendation 4:** Santa Barbara County Association of Governments should organize regular meetings of jurisdictional representatives to share successes and problems in affordable housing programs.

**City Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable insofar as the City does not have jurisdictional authority over the operations of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG). SBCAG would be the best agency to respond to this recommendation.

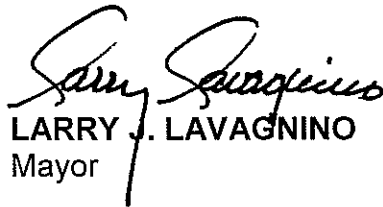
**Recommendation 5:** Santa Barbara County Association of Governments should first collect data on jurisdictional performance and compare it to current Regional Housing Needs Assessments and then use this information in the next round of allocations.

**City Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable insofar as the City does not have jurisdictional authority over the operations of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG). SBCAG would be the best agency to respond to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 6:** Jurisdictions should utilize successful non-profits as co-developers and administrators of affordable housing programs.

**City Response:** The recommendation has been implemented as the City has partnered with non-profit housing agencies to develop affordable housing programs, examples being the Housing Authority of Santa Barbara County, People's Self-Help Housing Corporation, and Habitat for Humanity to name a few.

The City of Santa Maria welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury Report.

  
LARRY J. LAVAGNINO  
Mayor