



City of Buellton

February 16, 2022

Ms. Pamela Olsen, Foreperson
Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Santa Barbara Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Response to 2021 Grand Jury Report: Keys to Housing the Homeless

Dear Ms. Olsen and Members of the Grand Jury:

Per the request of the Grand Jury, the City of Buellton presents the following responses to the report regarding two programs to address the needs of the County's homeless population. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your inquiry and to convey the City's concern regarding the homelessness issue as it pertains to the City of Buellton, our nearby communities, and the County as a whole.

Finding 1

During the COVID-19 pandemic Project Roomkey demonstrated the value of providing rooms, with appropriate services, for the vulnerable elderly homeless with underlying health conditions.

Response to Finding 1 - *AGREE*

Recommendation 1

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and all city councils within the County establish programs similar to Roomkey in both North and South County to continue to provide rooms, with appropriate services, for vulnerable elderly homeless with underlying health conditions.

Response to Recommendation 1 – *WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED* – *The expense of creating and administering a program such as Project Roomkey at the City level would not be justified given the very small, largely transitory, population of homeless individuals throughout the Santa Ynez Valley. However, a concept similar to Project Roomkey has been implemented on a very small scale in the Santa Ynez Valley (to include Buellton) through social service agencies, including People Helping People and the Santa Ynez Valley Senior Citizens Foundation. These organizations have addressed needs of specific individuals in need of temporary housing through providing short-term (up to 1 year) housing solutions on an ad hoc*

basis. Social services, if needed, are not provided on site as they are with Project Roomkey, but by existing social service agencies that already serve the community.

Finding 2

Few hotels and motels throughout Santa Barbara County were willing to participate in Project Roomkey

Response to Finding 2 – AGREE

Recommendation 2

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors instruct the Santa Barbara County Community Services Department to form an alliance with all city councils within the County to develop a roster of hotels and motels willing to participate in a Roomkey-type program.

Response to Recommendation 2 – WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – The expense of creating and administering a program such as Project Roomkey at the City level would not be justified given the very small, largely transitory, population of homeless individuals throughout the Santa Ynez Valley.

However, the City of Buellton has a variety of hotels and motels within the City limits, catering to a wide range of needs in terms of cost and provided amenities. A number of the smaller motels in Buellton (which have already been identified) have served as long-term, low-cost housing solutions for those experiencing homelessness or those on the brink of homelessness for many years, though not with rents being paid by the City or other agency as would be found in a Project Roomkey facility. However, the long-term plan for the City of Buellton calls for the removal of those motel units and for their replacement in other locations within the City with new housing solutions geared to address the needs of the populations currently living there. Several low- and very low-income housing development projects are underway in Buellton, with one of them being designed and funding being granted specifically to address the relocation of the current motel residents. The completion of these units will enable the residents of these motels to leave the frequently sub-standard living conditions found in their current residences in favor of new housing in the City of Buellton which will be affordable to them, provide better living conditions, and may also provide social services to the residents.

This being stated, the City will be happy work with the County's Community Services Department to help facilitate regional homeless services for the small number of homeless individuals which may travel through, or briefly reside within, Buellton.

Finding 3

Buildings for Homekey conversion have been difficult to locate and acquire.

Response to Finding 3 - AGREE

Recommendation 3

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and all city councils within the County identify possible Homekey sites including government owned properties in each jurisdiction.

Response to Recommendation 3 – HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – *The County has worked with the cities (including Buellton) to identify possible sites for conversion to Project Homekey housing units. Two Homekey projects have been established: one in Isla Vista and the other in Lompoc. The program that identified these sites continues to operate, and additional sites are being considered for the program and are currently seeking Homekey funding, this time in Goleta and in Santa Maria. Buellton continues to be a part of this effort, to include participation by the City's staff and elected officials.*

Finding 5

Both Project Roomkey and Project Homekey are reliant on short-term or one-time funding from the State and Federal governments

Response to Finding 5 - AGREE

Recommendation 5

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and all city councils within the County develop and implement a plan for funding Roomkey and Homekey-type programs.

Response to Recommendation 5 – WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – *As noted in the response to Recommendation 3, above, the City of Buellton has been working in conjunction with the County and other cities to identify locations for these types of programs. These joint efforts also include the identification and pursuit of funding for programs such as Project Roomkey and Project Homekey. Attempting to establish another program to attempt to fund these would be redundant and counter-productive given the limited resources available to address this important issue.*

The City of Buellton hopes that you have found these responses both sufficient and useful. Should additional information be required, please feel free to contact me directly.

Respectfully Submitted,


Scott Wolfe, ICMA-CM
City Manager