

**JOAN HARTMANN**

Third District, Chair

**DAS WILLIAMS**

First District, Vice Chair

**GREGG HART**

Second District

**BOB NELSON**

Fourth District

**STEVE LAVAGNINO**

Fifth District



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

County Administration Building

105 East Anapamu Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Telephone: (805) 568-2190

[www.countyofsb.org](http://www.countyofsb.org)

**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

February 8, 2022

Honorable Gustavo Lavayen

Presiding Judge

312 East Cook Street

Santa Maria, CA 93454

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, "The Keys to Housing the Homeless" published November 19, 2021.

Judge Lavayen:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

The Board appreciates the work conducted by the Community Services Department Housing and Community Development Division for their assistance in responding to this matter.

Sincerely,

Joan Hartmann, Chair

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

cc: Santa Barbara County Grand Jury

**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2021-22 Report  
“The Keys to Housing the Homeless”**

**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.**

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

**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.**

The recommendation has been implemented. The County is funding and developing of non-congregate shelter and interim housing sites. Project Roomkey is the State of California term for non-congregate shelter. The Casa Omega project, currently under development, is specifically designed to serve senior and medically fragile persons experiencing homelessness. Another example, in Isla Vista, is a project of 20 pallet non-congregate shelter units with supportive services that served 41 persons over a six-month period. These pallet units were then relocated to the Bridgehouse emergency shelter campus, and are still in use. Through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and State Homekey funding, the County acquired and operates the Hedges House of Hope interim housing site in Isla Vista. The most recent planned development will be the DignityMoves project in downtown Santa Barbara for 33 non-congregate units. The Roomkey site for medically vulnerable person funded by FEMA was operated from April 2020 to December 2021. This single project served 204 persons, 25% exited to sheltered destinations, and 53% percent have transitioned into permanent housing. The County of Santa Barbara recognizes the importance of Project Roomkey-type interim housing as a tool in addressing homelessness. Additionally, the County’s Public Health Department currently offers isolation and quarantine care at hotel sites for COVID-19 positive persons with other medical risk factors.

**Finding 2**

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

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**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.**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The County of Santa Barbara is using another method at this time to secure hotels. The County's General Services Real Property staff have been in regular contact with hotel owners to attempt to secure Roomkey sites throughout the pandemic. Community based organization, CityNet, is also regularly contacting local hotels for opportunity for Roomkey-type use. At this stage in the pandemic, the County is not pursuing interim housing at hotels following the Roomkey model primarily because there is not current provider capacity to operate or additional available hotels. Additionally, the County of Santa Barbara hosts the Elected Leaders forum with cities and other local leaders to support homelessness initiatives, such as Roomkey-type programs, should funding and facilities be identified. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County is contracting hotels for use as public health isolation and quarantine sites, which has not required establishing a formal alliance with the cities.

### **Finding 3**

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

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

### **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.**

The recommendation has been implemented. The County and the cities have actively participated in a Homekey workgroup to identify sites that can be converted into housing with state Homekey funding. This County lead workgroup has yielded two successful Homekey projects, in Lompoc and Isla Vista, and in 2022, two Homekey applications have been submitted for hotel sites in Goleta and Santa Maria. The County, cities, and partners continue to seek housing-development opportunities, including on County- and city-owned property. Creating and maintaining a regional site inventory of available or underutilized public and private lands for housing interventions is a priority of the Community Action Plan and is being coordinated through a sub-group of the Elected Leaders Forum. The County and cities actively work with the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara and the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara to identify sites currently on the market that could be acquired and converted into housing. In 2019, the County's Community Services Department utilized a contractor to review over 7,000 parcels in unincorporated areas of South County to compile a list of sites that could be developed for interim or permanent housing that were zoned by right per state legislation. The analysis provided a framework for assessing sites to be used for housing as resources such as the Homekey program become available. Both public housing authorities have made offers on properties for potential Homekey developments. Overall, the County of Santa Barbara (Hedges House of Hope) and Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara (hotel sites in Goleta and Santa Maria) have three Homekey application submissions for Homekey 2.0 State funding.

### **Finding 4**

**Project Homekey called upon various Santa Barbara County departments to work together creatively, quickly, and economically to transform a County owned office building into housing for the homeless.**

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation 4**

**That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors instruct the Santa Barbara County Community Services Department to solidify a team to replicate the successful efforts in converting buildings efficiently into housing for the homeless.**

The recommendation has been implemented. In 2020, the County convened a dedicated group to develop the Homekey Studios Project in Lompoc through an expedited development process. This dedicated team model has been duplicated with both the DignityMoves project in Santa Barbara and the Hedges House of Hope in Isla Vista. Further development/utilization of staff teams to shepherd these projects to completion will continue.

**Finding 5**

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

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**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.**

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. Identification and acquisition of additional funding sources for shelter, housing and services is a top priority among the Santa Maria/Santa Barbara County Continuum of Care, the Elected Leaders Forum and the County of Santa Barbara. Another planning implementation effort is not needed. These regional efforts, have yielded three Homekey application submissions for Homekey 2.0 State funding. The County, in collaboration with other jurisdictions as appropriate, continues to pursue opportunities to fund additional non-congregate sheltering and housing projects. In addition, the County has allocated \$22M of their American Rescue Plan funding to address homelessness. This includes \$3M for Homekey applications and \$5M of on-going operations costs of non-congregate shelter sites. Another example of jurisdictions collaborating to apply for and implement funding is the State's new competitive Encampment Resolution Fund. This source allows for interim housing through Roomkey similar efforts. The County and cities participate in a bi-monthly Elected Leaders Forum to Address Homelessness to align funding and coordinate implementation and leadership of the Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness. This forum is an opportunity to discuss Roomkey and Homekey opportunities. As referenced earlier in this response, the County and the cities participate in a Homekey workgroup to identify sites that can be converted into housing and discuss funding opportunities. The County notes that without an on-going source of funding to pay for non-congregate motel rooms and supportive services, such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), these types of programs are not sustainable in the long term.

**Finding 6**

**The Roomkey and Homekey programs require funding to provide wraparound services for the homeless.**

The Board of Supervisors agrees with this finding.

**Recommendation 6**

**That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors direct the Santa Barbara County Public Health, Behavioral Wellness, and Social Services Departments, along with the Santa Barbara County Community Services Department, to explore options for funding for wraparound services.**

The recommendation has been implemented. The Board has identified over \$22 million in recent federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) under the County's Health and Human Services (HHS) Plan to address homelessness in Santa Barbara County. This funding amount includes \$13.5 million for beds at Hedges House of Hope, Bridgehouse, and DignityMoves SB; \$3 million for Homekey match for project proposals in Santa Maria and Goleta; \$1.9 million for encampment sanitation and response; \$2.5 million for Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) services; and \$1.3 for outreach.

The County Executive Office regularly convenes the Homeless Inter-Agency Policy Council (HIAPC). The HIAPC has a primary goal of identifying opportunities to increase funding for wraparound services. The County implemented a Multi-Disciplinary Team comprised of Behavioral Wellness, Public Defender, and Public Health that has secured funding for expansion in 2022/23 and 2023/24. The County has allocated \$22M of their American Rescue Plan funding to address homelessness including \$7M in for wrap around services for unsheltered persons and \$5M for operations and services for the non-congregate shelter sites.

The County Board of Supervisors and County Staff recently applied for and/or received several new funding sources for wraparound services as follows:

- Permanent Local Housing Allocation from the State of California – 35% on-going funding source dedicated to services for permanent housing projects, which is currently supporting residents in three recent projects.
- Housing and Disability Advocacy Program- \$1.5Million allocated by State to the County of Santa Barbara (implementation will occur in 2022)
- Home Safe- \$1Million allocated by the State to the County of Santa Barbara (implementation will occur in 2022)
- HOME Investment Partnership – American Rescue Plan- request for \$680,000 for supportive services submitted in allocation plan to HUD in January 2022.
- Whole Person Care Pilot- \$500,000 allocated to New Beginnings Counseling Center for enhanced supportive services for medically vulnerable seniors referred through Project Roomkey and the County's Public Health Department

Another significant initiative to expand funding for wraparound services is happening at the state level through legislation and budgeting. California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) seeks to cover enhanced case management services for persons experiencing homelessness with Medi-Cal funding. CenCal Health will be the local lead in CalAIM implementation. CenCal Health is working with the key County departments listed in the Grand Jury's recommendation 6.