



## City of Salinas

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August 16, 2016

The Honorable Judge Mark E. Hood  
Presiding Judge, Superior Court  
County of Monterey  
240 Church Street  
Salinas, California 93901

**Re: City of Salinas's Response to Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report-  
"Housing Homeless Women?"**

Dear Presiding Judge Hood:

This letter is the City of Salinas's response to the Findings and Recommendations of the 2015-2016 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report- "Housing Homeless Women.". I would first like to thank the members of the Civil Grand Jury for their time and their effort taken to assist the City in improving its ability to provide services to the community. In its Final Report, the Civil Grand Jury overall made a total of seven Findings and seven Recommendations.

As requested by the Civil Grand Jury, the City of Salinas respectfully submits the following responses to Findings F4, F5, F6, and F7 and to Recommendations R4, R5, R6, and R7. While not specifically requested to do so, as means of providing additional information for the Civil Grand Jury's consideration, the City is also providing responses to Finding F1 and F2.

### **Final Report—Findings**

**Finding 1:** Monterey County's Lead Me Home Plan has stalled due to factors including the recession, loss of redevelopment funds, lack of identified leadership and political will.

**Response 1:** The respondent agrees with Finding 1. It is clear that homeless services across the country were greatly impacted by the recession and the severity of the housing market collapse. Loss of redevelopment and reduction in state and federal funds further exacerbated these challenges. Unfortunately, this crisis did not spur the necessary push to implement the Lead Me Home Plan, rather the resources never materialized to actually get the plan off the ground.

The initial plan called for full-time County of Monterey staff to ensure its implementation. Instead this aspect of the plan was changed and funding was delegated to non-profit organizations to do this work. Annual evaluations of the plan were not effectively conducted to improve resource allocation in order to achieve desired outcomes.

The Lead Me Home Plan is a well-crafted broad based community plan that if fully implemented could have produced outcomes that changed homelessness in Monterey County. From the

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respondent's perspective the Lead Me Home Plan was not adequately implemented, evaluated or stabilized in a manner that could have produced desired results.

In terms of recommendations our observation is that the Lead Me Home Plan is a ten-year plan that has run six years without successful implementation and should be revisited in order to create a plan that is relevant to our post-recession communities.

Finding 2: The creation of the Housing Pipeline Committee, the first and primary step of the Lead Me Home Plan, did not occur.

Response 2: The respondent partially disagrees with Finding 2. The Housing Pipeline of the Lead Me Home Plan was only just reactivated in March 2016 after having gone dormant for several years. Though the committee as reconstituted is having some effect, implementing this central piece of the Lead Me Home Plan so late in the life of the plan cycle has not produced desired results.

In terms of a recommendation, we believe the entire Lead Me Home Plan should be revisited to produce a plan that is relevant to today's realities. This would include a complete evaluation of appropriate activities to create needed housing.

Finding 4: Funding is provided by Monterey County and cities to build low cost housing most of which is unaffordable for homeless women.

Response 4: Available funding to build additional affordable housing for individuals and families living at 0-30% Area Median Income (AMI) is insufficient to meet the need in our community. The challenges to increase affordable housing (0-30% AMI) at the local level are many and varied. The City of Salinas is increasingly becoming a high rent community with few available, affordable rental units and an insufficient number of landlords willing to participate in rental subsidy programs such as HCV (Section 8) or HUD-VASH. In addition, lack of sufficient land and funding capacity compound an already challenged landscape.

Despite our limited resources, the City of Salinas has led Monterey County in the development of affordable housing. We have used a variety of tools including Redevelopment, CDBG, HOME, property disposition, and loans to facilitate the production of affordable housing. Since FY 2013, the City has allocated over \$5 million to facilitate affordable housing preservation and production. Notable projects include Vista De La Terraza (preservation of 40 units), Haciendas Phase II & III (100 units), and Haciendas Seniors (41 units). These efforts continue through work with Mid-Peninsula Housing on a 90 unit mixed-used project on City owned property in Chinatown. It is expected that 50% of these units will be allocated to 0% percent income occupants.

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The City also updated its Housing Element and Consolidated Plan in 2015, which include specific goals and policies in order to produce housing for our most vulnerable populations including the homeless. To better determine the appropriate levels of housing for all segments of our population, the City recently launched a target market housing study in the Alisal section of Salinas, Downtown and Chinatown. We are also leading the development of a regional Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan.

**Findings 5:** There are insufficient resources to house the homeless, evidenced by the increasing number of encampments and people living in the street.

**Response 5:** The respondent agrees with Finding 5. Since the recession the City of Salinas has seen the number of homeless encampments growing throughout our City. This growth has led to a startling increase in the visibility of homeless residents and concerns for public safety have become high priority. Emergency shelter beds are a key component and current inventory should be maintained and expanded.

Recognizing the need for shelter especially in cold weather, the City of Salinas has helped fund and provided space for winter shelter over the past four years. Unfortunately, the service provider operating this shelter recently folded and the space we have used in the past is not available. Consequently, we have been in conversation with the County asking them to provide a facility for this important service and working with the Coalition to identify a new service provider.

In addition to lack of resources, we believe that the increase in homeless encampments in Salinas is the result of more aggressive displacement of homeless encampments in neighboring cities. Thus, we believe that there should be shelters and other resources evenly dispersed throughout the region and a collaborative approach to responding to encampments, so as not to shift people around the region.

**Finding 6:** The cities of Monterey, Salinas, and Marina and Monterey County have identified property owned by them that could be used for low cost and transitional housing, but it is currently not being utilized.

**Response 6:** The respondent partially agrees with Finding F6. Although the City of Salinas does not have much owned land that could be used for residential purposes, we did identify potential housing sites as part of its General Plan Housing Element update in order to meet our Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirements for the 2015-2023 planning period. The City identified sites with appropriate zoning densities, development standards and infrastructure to meet its RHNA which includes extremely low-income, very low-income and low-income categories.

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An ongoing challenge is that the few parcels the City owns are small and very difficult to develop. However, the City is actively working with Mid-Peninsula Housing on a 90 unit mixed-used project in the heart of Chinatown on a City property. This project is focused on providing permanent supportive housing for homeless and disabled individuals. We have also teamed up with Dorothy's Place to create a health and hygiene services center for the homeless in Chinatown.

Finding 7: Safe overnight parking for homeless women is scarce in Monterey County.

Response 7: The Respondent does not agree with Finding 7. Due to lack of sanitation and safety the City does not support overnight parking in vehicles for any population.

### **Final Report—Recommendations**

Recommendation 4: Monterey County and cities within it, shall include more very low cost housing in their action and development plans, beginning with their 2017 plans.

Response 4: The City has already done this. As indicated earlier, the City of Salinas has recently updated our Housing Element and Consolidated Plan to include very low cost housing into these critical planning documents. Moreover, the City is undertaking several additional planning efforts including a revitalization plan for Chinatown, Alisal Vibrancy Plan, regional Farmworker Housing Study, and target housing market study in core areas of the City to facilitate housing production at all income levels. The City is also updating its Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and anticipates the incorporation of incentives to encourage deeper affordability.

Recommendation 5: Monterey County and cities within it shall cooperate with non-profits on proposals for alternative temporary shelters for the homeless.

Response 5: The City will continue to cooperate with non-profits on this effort. It should be noted that they City has funded a winter shelter over the past four years and is actively looking for a new service provider and facility for these critical services. County leadership is much needed as City facilities are being fully utilized by critical youth and senior programming.

As an entitlement community, the City of Salinas manages a HUD Emergency Solution Grant (ESG) for a variety of homeless services including rapid re-housing, actively funding and coordinating with several non-profits. More recently, we agreed to take on administration of state ESG funds for Monterey and San Benito Counties with the assistance of the Coalition to ensure that the region has additional funds for services such as shelters. Although we have these additional funds, non-profits lack the space and capacity to operate alternative temporary shelters, which likely will require County government to step into this role.

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Recommendation 6: Monterey County and cities within it shall identify which of their owned property could be utilized for very low cost and transitional housing by June 2017.

Response 6: As mentioned above, the City has already done this. We are specifically focused on developing a City property in Chinatown for this population. We anticipate that Mid-Peninsula Housing will apply for tax credits for the next TCAC round in March 2017. The City is also looking at its CDBG program to acquire additional properties in order to facilitate affordable and permanent supportive housing production.

Recommendation 7: Monterey County and cities within it shall increase permits for safe overnight parking for homeless women living in their vehicles by June 2017.

Response 7: The City does not support overnight parking for homeless women due to lack of sanitation and safety. We would be concerned that allowing this type of parking would place undue burden on an overly strapped Police Department. As it is, the City receives a couple of hundred calls regarding abandoned cars and encampments per year.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe Gunter  
Mayor

cc: City Council  
City Manager  
City Attorney