

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

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

**Board of Supervisors' Response to the 2006-07 Civil Grand Jury Report on:  
*"Affordable Housing In Santa Barbara County – Myth or Reality?"***

Dear Judge Melville:

During its regular meeting of Tuesday, August 14, 2007, the Board of Supervisors adopted the following responses to the 2006-07 Grand Jury's report on "Affordable Housing In Santa Barbara County – Myth or Reality?".

The Board of Supervisors thanks the Grand Jury for its findings and recommendations on this important matter.

As required by the Grand Jury, responses for Findings 3-9 and all recommendations (1-6) follows.

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**Findings:**

3. Funding to subsidize affordable housing is limited and not keeping pace with increased costs. **Response:** The Board agrees with this 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. **Response:** While the Board agrees with this finding, the Board also appreciates the Grand

Jury's caution that the courts may enforce compliance with Housing Element law if suit is brought against a city or county.

5. Affordable housing programs vary across jurisdictions but are not always matched to local needs. **Response:** The Board agrees with this finding and make every attempt at incorporating local housing needs by Housing Market Area into our decision making process in each instance.
6. There are varying degrees of public and local government support for affordable housing programs across jurisdictions. **Response:** The Board agrees with this finding.
7. Regional Housing Needs assessment goals have not been met in most jurisdictions; there is a marked shortfall in the low and very low income categories. Guadalupe is the sole exception. **Response:** The Board agrees with this 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. **Response:** The Board agrees with this finding.
9. Non-profit organizations such as Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, People's Self-Help Housing and Habitat for Humanity play an important role in affordable housing programs. **Response:** The Board agrees with this finding.

### **Recommendations:**

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). **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented and reflects County policy since the inception of the County's affordable housing programs. Since maximum qualifying annual incomes range from less than \$33,550, up to \$134,200 for a family of four, a flexible, diverse program rather than a 'one size fits all' approach has been followed. Our objective has always been to attain an optimal mix of rental and ownership opportunities within the context of serving the neediest.
2. At least annually, each jurisdiction should hold informational community meetings to explain all aspects of its affordable housing program. **Response:** This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented on an on-going basis. The County's first informational community meetings will precede the next major affordable housing development which is expected to be

near completion sometime in the Spring of 2008. Meetings will be held in both the northern and southern parts of the County approximately 30-45 days prior to the beginning of the application process.

3. Jurisdictions should focus on developing more very low and low-income housing to meet Regional Housing Needs Assessment goals. **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented. The County has devoted HUD-allocated federal funds for Fiscal Year 2007/08 almost exclusively for the purpose of providing low and very low income housing opportunities. In addition, during the coming fiscal year, emphasis will be placed on utilizing developer 'in lieu' fees to meet very low and low income housing needs.
4. Santa Barbara County Association of Governments should organize regular meeting of jurisdictional representatives to share successes and problems in affordable housing programs. **Response:** This recommendation, directed at SBCAG has not, to our knowledge, been implemented. Although the final determination of whether or not this recommendation will be implemented rests with SBCAG, the County would proactively participate in such meetings.
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. **Response:** This recommendation, directed at SBCAG has not, to our knowledge, been implemented. If implemented by SBCAG, the County would gather, summarize and provide all housing program data requested by SBCAG.
6. Jurisdictions should utilize successful non-profits as co-developers and administrators of affordable housing programs. **Response:** This recommendation has been implemented and has been standard County practice for many years. Typically, the County provides grant funds from Federal and State sources and some locally generated funds to non-profit developers who, in turn, construct and manage affordable housing projects. Three examples of developments partially funded with County grant funds which are currently under construction include St. Vincent's/Mercy Housing (Mercy Housing California), G & College (Lompoc Housing CDC), and Ted Zenich Gardens (County Housing Authority).

The Board sincerely thanks the Grand Jury for their thoughtful involvement in affordable housing issues, and we appreciate their comments and recommendations for improving our housing programs.

Sincerely,

Brooks Firestone  
Chair, Board of Supervisors