



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: CEO, P&D, and CSD
Department No.: 012, 053, and 057
Agenda Date: September 9, 2025
Placement: Departmental Agenda
Estimated Time: 30 minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s): Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer

Lisa Plowman, Director, Planning & Development

Jesus Armas, Director, Community Services

Contact: Wade Horton, Assistant County Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Responses to 2024-25 Grand Jury Report on the South Coast Housing Crisis

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: P&D and CSD

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Consider and adopt the responses in Attachment A as the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2024-25 Grand Jury report entitled "Santa Barbara County South Coast Housing Crisis – A Call to Action;"
- b) Authorize the Chair to sign the letter included in Attachment A, and forward the letter and responses to the Presiding Judge of the Santa Barbara County Superior Court; and
- c) Determine pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guideline 15378(b)(5) that the above actions are not a project subject to CEQA review because they are governmental administrative activities that do not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

Summary Text:

On June 23, 2025, the Santa Barbara County 2024-25 Grand Jury (Grand Jury) issued a report entitled "Santa Barbara County South Coast Housing Crisis – A Call to Action." On September 9, 2025, the County of Santa Barbara (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) will consider the proposed

responses to the report, adopt their preferred responses, and authorize the Chair to sign the response letter and forward the letter and response to the Superior Court Presiding Judge. The Board is required to respond in writing to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days of the report issuance.

Discussion:

In the report entitled “Santa Barbara County South Coast Housing Crisis – A Call to Action” (Attachment B), the Grand Jury found that the South Coast’s housing crisis is worsening, particularly for low- and moderate-income residents. The Grand Jury found that barriers continue to stand in the way of housing construction, including high labor and construction costs, restrictive zoning, regulatory complexity, and community resistance. In addition, the Grand Jury found that while local governments and other stakeholders on the South Coast have made efforts to lessen these constraints and build more housing, more should be done to address the scale of the community’s need. The Grand Jury urges local governments to streamline permitting, expand funding, and coordinate more effectively across jurisdictions to meet affordable housing goals by 2031.

The Board is named a responder to Findings 1, 2, and 3 and Recommendations 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3b, 3d. Please refer to Attachment A for the Board's responses.

Background:

RHNA

State law requires local governments to plan for the housing needs of their residents across all income levels. Every eight years, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) works with local councils of government (COGs) to provide local governments with a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The RHNA assigns housing unit goals across income levels, which are based on the area median income (AMI) in each county. In 2024, the AMI for Santa Barbara County for a family of four was \$119,100.

In past RHNA cycles, most housing built in the County was developed in the unincorporated areas of North County due to land cost and availability. This contributed to an acute housing crisis on the South Coast where housing supply and construction have not kept pace with demand. To help address this issue, Santa Barbara County’s COG, the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), divided the County’s RHNA into two subregions – the North County and South Coast. Table 1, below, shows the RHNA for the Cities and County in the South Coast for the current cycle (2023-2031).

Table 1 – 2023-2031 Santa Barbara RHNA by Jurisdiction

South Coast Jurisdiction	Total RHNA	Income Level			
		Very Low	Low	Moderate	Above Moderate
Carpinteria	901	286	132	135	348
Santa Barbara	8,001	2,147	1,381	1,441	3,032
Goleta	1,837	682	324	370	461
Unincorporated County	4,142	809	957	1,051	1,325

Housing Element Implementation

The Grand Jury report highlights the efforts of South Coast jurisdictions to meet their RHNA's. For example, every jurisdiction has adopted a housing element that includes an inventory of sites available to accommodate its RHNA, and all jurisdictions identified sufficient sites to exceed their RHNA's by 10 to 15 percent. These housing elements also include goals and implementing programs to help developers to build more housing, including strategies such as process improvements, amending design standards, relaxing regulations, providing funding, modifying fee structures, and developing public-private partnerships. For example, Chapter 5 of the [County's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update](#) contains six goals and 25 programs designed to address the housing needs of all economic segments of the community.

Grand Jury Investigation and Recommendations

The Grand Jury investigated the reasons behind the housing shortage on the South Coast through an analysis of state housing laws, affordable housing agreements, housing elements, and pending and approved permit applications. The Grand Jury also watched City Council and Board hearings and interviewed City, County, and SBCAG staff. The Grand Jury found that state and federal funding limitations, regulatory and legal complexity, and high development costs pose significant barriers to housing production. To help address these challenges, the Grand Jury recommends the following:

- Identify publicly owned properties to be utilized for affordable housing;
- Invite public and private developers to work with the County to build affordable housing on the publicly owned land identified as available;
- Create a position to coordinate and facilitate the application and approval processes for affordable housing projects;
- Review processes to prioritize affordable housing projects;
- Apply a ministerial approval process to affordable housing developments with 75 percent or more low-income units;
- Find ways to waive, reduce or amortize fees for affordable housing projects;
- Increase funding to the Housing Trust Fund of Santa Barbara County to facilitate affordable housing development; and
- Promote contributions to housing trust funds by other non-governmental organizations, the philanthropic community, and the public.

Many of these recommendations have already been implemented by the County. For example, the County's sites inventory for the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update identified nine County-owned sites for future affordable housing development and the County is currently using four sites for emergency shelters and supportive housing in the interim. The County has also taken steps to streamline permitting requirements and timelines, initiate public-private partnerships with developers to build affordable housing, and reduce and delay payment of development impact fees. Please see the Board's response to the Grand Jury (Attachment A) for more information.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

There are no fiscal or facilities impacts as a result of the Board's action on this matter.

Special Instructions:

1. As per the recommended actions, please forward the signed letter and responses to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, Patricia Kelly, at pkelly@sbcourts.org and to the Grand Jury at sbcgj@sbcourts.org.
2. Please send a copy of the signed letter and a copy of the minute order to Jessi Steele-Blossom, Principal Analyst, at jesteele@countyofsb.org.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Board of Supervisors Response – “Santa Barbara County South Coast Housing Crisis – A Call to Action”

Attachment B – 2024-25 Grand Jury Report – “Santa Barbara County South Coast Housing Crisis – A Call to Action”

Contact Information:

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