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Response to 2021-22 Grand Jury Report: The Keys to Housing the Homeless

*County of Santa Barbara
Board of Supervisors*

February 8, 2022

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors :

- a) Consider and adopt the responses in Attachment A as the Board of Supervisors' response to the 2021-22 Grand Jury report entitled "The Keys to Housing the Homeless," Attachment B;
- b) Authorize the Chair to sign the letter included in Attachment A and forward the letter and responses to the Presiding Judge of Santa Barbara County Superior Court; and
- c) Determine that the recommended actions are not the approval of a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5) and 15378(b)(4), finding that the recommended actions consist of administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Grand Jury recommends more planning and funding for Project Roomkey, Homekey and services.

“While Roomkey and Homekey have only helped a fraction of the total homeless in the County, the two projects have set a precedent and illuminated the way for similar projects to house the homeless.”

THE KEYS TO HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Two State Programs Offer Rooms and

SUMMARY

In 2020, the State of California (State) proposed two programs to their homeless populations: Project Roomkey and Project Homekey. In urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent disastrous Roomkey secured short-term hotel rooms for chronically ill elderly homeless catching and spreading the virus. Homekey was intended to house so through conversion of available buildings to permanent housing. Funding for the communities able to meet specific time sensitive needs. Santa County (County) took advantage of the State's offers to provide housing to some of the County's homeless.

The 2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury (Jury) studied the two implemented in Santa Barbara County. The Roomkey funding ended Homekey funding allocation ended December 31, 2020. The Santa Barbara County agencies to work together quickly.

The County has found it difficult to implement Homekey. There is a need for more funding and agencies are reluctant to open underused hotels.

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

2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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.

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 provide rooms, with appropriate services, for vulnerable elderly homeless with health conditions.

Finding 2

The Board of Supervisors instruct the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to solidify a team to replicate the successful efforts in other counties and bring them efficiently into housing for the homeless.

Finding 5

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

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.

2021 Santa Barbara County Grand Jury

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MORE ROOMKEY AND HOMEKEY PROJECTS RECOMMENDED

Grand Jury Findings:

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.
2. Few hotels and motels throughout Santa Barbara County were willing to participate in Project Roomkey.
3. Buildings for Homekey conversion have been difficult to locate and acquire.
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.
5. Both Project Roomkey and Project Homekey are reliant on short-term or one-time funding from the State and Federal governments.
6. The Roomkey and Homekey programs require funding to provide wraparound services for the homeless.

The County agrees with all findings.

Grand Jury Recommendations:

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.

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.

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.

Grand Jury Recommendations:

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.

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.

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.

Detail on Recommendation 6: Dedicated County HHS Plan funding

HHS Plan: Housing and Homelessness - 100 Beds	\$ 13.5 million	Hedges House of Hope Bridgehouse DignityMoves SB
HHS Plan: Housing and Homelessness- Homekey	\$ 3 million	Homekey Match: -Santa Maria -Santa Barbara
HHS Plan: Housing and Homelessness - Encampment	\$ 1.9 million	Coordinator sanitation, clean up encampment
HHS Plan: Housing and Homelessness – Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)	\$ 2.5 million	MDT Services
HHS Plan: Housing and Homelessness - Outreach	\$ 1.3 million	Outreach teams
Interim shelter beds and wraparound services	\$ 22.2 million	Sites and services countywide

Project Roomkey (Non-Congregate Shelter)

Roomkey South Outcomes:

204 persons served

- 53% transitioned to permanent housing
- 25% moved to other sheltered locations
- 22% exited without shelter, passed away at hotel or entered hospital

Roomkey Similar Projects

- Casa Omega
- Isla Vista/Lompoc Valley Pallets
- Hedges House of Hope (Isla Vista Shelter)
- DignityMoves Santa Barbara
- Public Health Isolation and Quarantine



Countywide Homekey

Two Funded Projects

- \$3.12M Homekey Studios Lompoc – 14 Units
- \$6.99M Isla Vista Shelter – 22 Rooms (50 beds)



Two Additional Hotel Conversion Project Applications Submitted

- Super 8 in Goleta – 60 Units
- Motel 6 in Santa Maria – 75 Units



State of CA allocated \$1.45 billion in FY 21-22 and \$1.3 billion in FY 22-23 for Homekey for local governments to purchase and rehabilitate housing to convert into interim or permanent, long-term housing.



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