



COUNTY OF VENTURA COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oxnard Vagabond Inn Under Consideration for Project HomeKey Funding

Effort aims to provide housing for homeless

Ventura, CA – The Vagabond Inn property, located in Oxnard, is under consideration for Project HomeKey Funding. Governor Newsom announced in July that \$600 million in funding would become available to cities and counties across California to buy housing for Californians experiencing homelessness who are at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19. The Oxnard hotel is the first hotel in the County to be considered for the funding.

Project HomeKey makes funding available for counties to collaborate with the State to acquire and rehabilitate various housing options, such as hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings, residential care facilities and tiny homes. It also includes funding for wrap-around supportive services. The County was quick to respond to the funding opportunity by inviting cities to participate in the application process in advance. Cities partnered in the selection of development partners in anticipation of state funding for the project. Ventura, Oxnard, Fillmore, Santa Paula and Thousand Oaks participated to select development and operational partners. Community Development Partners and Mercy House were selected, and the effort began to find locations interested in selling.

“This new program will build on the success of Project Roomkey, which provided temporary housing to some of our most vulnerable residents” said Mike Powers, County Executive Officer. “It represents the remarkable opportunity to eliminate much of the long-term risk for these individuals by providing stable, longer term housing and support.”

Project HomeKey is the state’s response to protect homeless individuals from COVID-19. The effort is the next phase of Project RoomKey. Launched in April, Project RoomKey focused on moving shelter residents from congregant housing as well as moving unhoused people living on the streets, who were either at high risk of contracting Covid-19 or had already tested positive to hotel sites. The effort also provided a safe space for positive community members needing a place to isolate to protect family or other household members from COVID-19. More than 450 people were served by the County of Ventura in the Project RoomKey program. 50% of the population served was over the age of 65, 85% were living on the streets, 75% had serious health conditions that put them at high risk for COVID-19.

Despite the end of Project RoomKey there continues to be need for non-congregate sheltering for vulnerable residents at increased risk of contracting COVID-19. The County of Ventura has been proactive throughout the pandemic in seeking solutions to help protect vulnerable residents; the County was one of the first in the State to implement Project RoomKey. Community members were provided with meals, medical care and shelter during the program. Once the program ended, those in need were provided with motel vouchers. Currently, there are 130 individuals sheltered at local motels. Others were connected with congregate shelter, permanent housing, safe sleep programs and other placements.



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As a result of preparing in advance, the County was among the first in the state to apply for Homekey funding as soon as it became available and among the first to receive notice of conditional award. To be awarded a Project Homekey grant, the County must meet several requirements, including the development team's experience and capacity to acquire and operate the properties, the ability to show how the project will serve target populations and address racial equities, and the extent to which the County can demonstrate the project's favorable community impact. Another critical requirement: the County must be able to actually disburse the funds by December 30, 2020.

"We are thrilled to partner with the City of Oxnard, Community Development Partners and Mercy House to end homelessness for 70 individuals in Ventura County. This resource will help meet a critical housing need for individuals who are experiencing homelessness and are at high-risk for COVID-19," said Ventura County Continuum of Care Program Manager Tara Carruth.

The County in partnership with the Ventura County Continuum of Care has led the COVID-19 response including medical outreach to unsheltered individuals through the Backpack Medicine Program, hygiene and medical services provided at the County's One Stop programs, safe operations of emergency shelters and transitional housing programs and connection to permanent housing and rental assistance programs through the Continuum of Care's network of housing providers.

The County of Ventura is committed to helping the most vulnerable throughout the year. The Ventura County Continuum of Care Alliance is a regional consortium covering all communities in Ventura County, dedicated to the efficient and effective administration of homeless assistance grants and programs. Through County services, individuals and families are connected to a network of agencies that provide health care, mental health services, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, temporary housing, and other benefits, including help in securing permanent housing.

Oxnard Project HomeKey Funding Through the City's proposal to the County and the State, the Vagabond Inn would be a private purchase by Community Development Partners and operated by Mercy House.

Community Meetings The City of Oxnard is hosting its first virtual community neighborhood meeting on Wednesday, September 2 at 6 p.m. to discuss the proposed acquisition and rehabilitation of the Vagabond Inn and its conversion into permanent supportive housing. To RSVP visit <http://bit.ly/oxnardprojecthomekey>. A second meeting will be held at a later date.