



# CITY OF OJAI

401 SOUTH VENTURA STREET  
P.O. BOX 1570 / OJAI, CA 93024  
TELEPHONE (805) 646-5581  
FAX (805) 646-4701

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

RECEIVED  
NOV 18 2010  
VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

November 15, 2010

Ventura County Grand Jury  
800 S. Victoria Ave. L#3751  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Modified Response to Grand Jury Report "Where Are You Sleeping Tonight?"

Members of the Ventura County Grand Jury,

This letter serves as the City's response to your letter of October 24, 2010 regarding the need for the City to conduct further study on several recommendations in the above-referenced report.

In the City's initial response to the report, we indicated that further study would be necessary regarding Recommendations Nos. R-02, R-03, R-05 and R-06. The City erred in its responses to the above-referenced recommendations, as the City was not intending to do further study on these recommendations itself. We believe that such a study would be the responsibility of the County of Ventura or some agency under the auspices of the County. The City would be willing to participate as necessary in whatever study or studies the County may do on this matter, however the City of Ojai does not have the staff or financial resources to perform study on what is clearly a countywide issue.

Therefore, for the reasons stated above, the City must change its responses to Recommendations Nos. R-02, R-03, R-05 and R-06 to state that these recommendations *will not be implemented*.

- **Recommendation R-02:** The Cities should take a leading role in coordinating services and resources directed at eliminating or minimizing homelessness in their communities through marshalling and motivating volunteers to assist with programs for the homeless.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented. Cities have not, and should not, take the *leading* role in providing such services. However, the City can certainly play a role in motivating volunteers and in serving as a communication hub for the community. Solutions to homelessness often involve and require integration of housing needs and the facilitation of mental health/counseling services. Counties have historically acted to

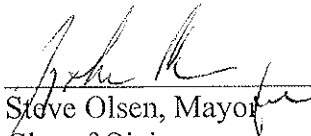
provide social services. To ask the City to take the leading role simply seems out of place when the City is not the lead provider in services and often not the most knowledgeable about the available services.

- **Recommendation R-03:** The County and Cities should make every effort to ensure that the original goal of the Strategy, to reduce homelessness within the County by 50% during the first five years (2008-2012), is accomplished.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented. The recommendation is vague at best and does not take in account the current economic realities. The lagging economy has most likely resulted in increased financial pressures on families and individuals, meaning more persons today are at risk of becoming homeless than in 2008. An improving economic situation would increase the chances of reaching the target, while a continued downturn would have the opposite effect. Nonetheless, the City concurs that the goal is certainly laudable, if not specifically achievable. If cities are to achieve this goal, they need tools available to them they generally do not have today. The County should take the lead role in addressing this recommendation.
- **Recommendation R-05:** Innovative and effective programs developed by Cities and other organizations should be documented and replicated in other areas of the County that lack such programs.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented. The City agrees that innovative and effective programs should be documented and shared with other agencies. However, each community has specific needs and resources available to meet those needs; in other words what is working in one community may not work as effectively in others. The recommendation also fails to address whether cities could absorb the cost of providing such programs; not all cities have equal resources available. Finally, the recommendation fails to recognize that the County has traditionally funded and provided such services, and seeks to shift those responsibilities to cities. The County should take the lead role in addressing this recommendation.
- **Recommendation R-06:** Cities that have not pursued grant funds, or have been unsuccessful in receiving them, should aggressively seek such funds.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will not be implemented. Searching for grant funds requires the use of resources. Why should cities that have been unsuccessful in receiving grant funds aggressively seek such funds? The recommendation, it appears, assumes that grant funds are simply “found money,” but the reality is that most grant programs require: a) significant matching funds that require the devotion of either new revenue or re-directing revenues funding other services; and b) require substantial staff time to prepare the grant application and, if awarded, the subsequent reporting for the grant; and c) many grant programs are so highly specific that they do not or would not meet the communities highest and greatest needs, and implementation of such programs could actually detract from

other established services. The City of Ojai does not have the staff resources to pursue grants of this nature.

Should you have any questions on the above, please contact Interim City Manager John Baker at (805) 646-5581.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Olsen, Mayor  
City of Ojai

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, Ventura County  
P.O. Box 6489, Ventura, California, 93009



# CITY OF OJAI

401 SOUTH VENTURA STREET  
P.O. BOX 1570 / OJAI, CA 93024  
TELEPHONE (805) 646-5581  
FAX (805) 646-4701

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

RECEIVED  
AUG 05 2010  
VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

July 14, 2010

Ventura County Grand Jury  
800 S. Victoria Ave. L#3751  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Response to Grand Jury Report "Where Are You Sleeping Tonight?"

Members of the Ventura County Grand Jury,

The City of Ojai is pleased to respond to the 2009-2010 Ventura County Grand Jury Report titled "Where Are You Sleeping Tonight?"

The report requires the City to provide responses to the findings in the report as well as to three specific recommendations outlined in the report. The City's response is as follows:

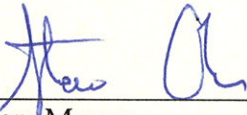
- **Findings Nos. F-1 through F-42**
  - **City of Ojai Response:** The City of Ojai concurs with each finding.
- **Recommendation R-01:** Both public agencies and nonprofit organizations should be adding low-income rental housing. Other entities should be encouraged to do so by governmental agencies.
  - **Response:** The City will be implementing this recommendation. The City's Redevelopment Agency is actively planning for two affordable housing projects. One would be a demonstration housing project of approximately 65 affordable units. The other project would be a senior housing project of approximately 50 units. The planning process has not yet reached a point where the locations for either project are certain; however land is available within the City and Redevelopment Agency project area to accommodate such projects. Additional planning activities are planned for the coming year. The City and its redevelopment agency are open to other affordable housing opportunities as they may present themselves.

- **Recommendation R-02:** The Cities should take a leading role in coordinating services and resources directed at eliminating or minimizing homelessness in their communities through marshalling and motivating volunteers to assist with programs for the homeless.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. Cities have not, and should not, take the *leading* role in providing such services. However, the City can certainly play a role in motivating volunteers and in serving as a communication hub for the community. Solutions to homelessness often involve and require integration of housing needs and the facilitation of mental health/counseling services. Counties have historically acted to provide social services. To ask the City to take the leading role simply seems out of place when the City is not the lead provider in services and often not the most knowledgeable about the available services.
  
- **Recommendation R-03:** The County and Cities should make every effort to ensure that the original goal of the Strategy, to reduce homelessness within the County by 50% during the first five years (2008-2012), is accomplished.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. The recommendation is vague at best and does not take in account the current economic realities. The lagging economy has most likely resulted in increased financial pressures on families and individuals, meaning more persons today are at risk of becoming homeless than in 2008. An improving economic situation would increase the chances of reaching the target, while a continued downturn would have the opposite effect. Nonetheless, the City concurs that the goal is certainly laudable, if not specifically achievable. If cities are to achieve this goal, they need tools available to them they generally do not have today.
  
- **Recommendation R-05:** Innovative and effective programs developed by Cities and other organizations should be documented and replicated in other areas of the County that lack such programs.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. The City agrees that innovative and effective programs should be documented and shared with other agencies. However, each community has specific needs and resources available to meet those needs; in other words what is working in one community may not work as effectively in others. The recommendation also fails to address whether cities could absorb the cost of providing such programs; not all cities have equal resources available. Finally, the recommendation fails to recognize that the County has traditionally funded and provided such services, and seeks to shift those responsibilities to cities.

- **Recommendation R-06:** Cities that have not pursued grant funds, or have been unsuccessful in receiving them, should aggressively seek such funds.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. Searching for grant funds requires the use of resources. Why should cities that have been unsuccessful in receiving grant funds aggressively seek such funds? The recommendation, it appears, assumes that grant funds are simply “found money,” but the reality is that most grant programs require: a) significant matching funds that require the devotion of either new revenue or re-directing revenues funding other services; and b) require substantial staff time to prepare the grant application and, if awarded, the subsequent reporting for the grant; and c) many grant programs are so highly specific that they do not or would not meet the communities highest and greatest needs, and implementation of such programs could actually detract from other established services.
  
- **Recommendation R-07:** The County and Cities should continue to recognize and publicly thank the various nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and other volunteer groups for their ongoing and highly effective support of the homeless population in Ventura County.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will be implemented on an on-going basis. The City wholeheartedly agrees with the recommendation. Furthermore, the City takes this opportunity to specifically recognize two organizations that have been driving forces behind reducing homelessness and providing services to the homeless in the Ojai community: the Ojai Valley Family Shelter and HELP of Ojai. The Ojai Valley Family Shelter provides temporary shelter to the homeless during the winter months at a location which rotates among participating churches. HELP of Ojai provides an array of social services to area residents, including administration of the City’s Home Rehabilitation Program and Eviction Prevention/Lease Assistance Program, both of which serve to prevent persons from falling into homelessness.

Should you have any questions on the above, please contact City Manager Jere Kersnar at (805) 646-5581.

Sincerely,



---

Steve Olsen, Mayor  
City of Ojai

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, Ventura County  
P.O. Box 6489, Ventura, California, 93009



# CITY OF OJAI

401 SOUTH VENTURA STREET  
P.O. BOX 1570 / OJAI, CA 93024  
TELEPHONE (805) 646-5581  
FAX (805) 646-1980

RECEIVED  
AUG 04 2010  
VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

July 14, 2010

Ventura County Grand Jury  
800 S. Victoria Ave. L#3751  
Ventura, CA 93009

RE: Response to Grand Jury Report "Where Are You Sleeping Tonight?"

Members of the Ventura County Grand Jury,

The City of Ojai City Manager is pleased to respond to the 2009-2010 Ventura County Grand Jury Report titled "Where Are You Sleeping Tonight?"

The report requires the City to provide responses to the findings in the report as well as to three specific recommendations outlined in the report. The City's response is as follows:

- **Findings Nos. F-1 through F-42**
  - **City of Ojai Response:** The City of Ojai concurs with each finding.
- **Recommendation R-01:** Both public agencies and nonprofit organizations should be adding low-income rental housing. Other entities should be encouraged to do so by governmental agencies.
  - **Response:** The City will be implementing this recommendation. The City's Redevelopment Agency is actively planning for two affordable housing projects. One would be a demonstration housing project of approximately 65 affordable units. The other project would be a senior housing project of approximately 50 units. The planning process has not yet reached a point where the locations for either project are certain; however land is available within the City and Redevelopment Agency project area to accommodate such projects. Additional planning activities are planned for the coming year. The City and its redevelopment agency are open to other affordable housing opportunities as they may present themselves.

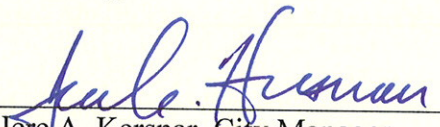
- **Recommendation R-02:** The Cities should take a leading role in coordinating services and resources directed at eliminating or minimizing homelessness in their communities through marshalling and motivating volunteers to assist with programs for the homeless.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. Cities have not, and should not, take the *leading* role in providing such services. However, the City can certainly play a role in motivating volunteers and in serving as a communication hub for the community. Solutions to homelessness often involve and require integration of housing needs and the facilitation of mental health/counseling services. Counties have historically acted to provide social services. To ask the City to take the leading role simply seems out of place when the City is not the lead provider in services and often not the most knowledgeable about the available services.
- **Recommendation R-03:** The County and Cities should make every effort to ensure that the original goal of the Strategy, to reduce homelessness within the County by 50% during the first five years (2008-2012), is accomplished.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. The recommendation is vague at best and does not take in account the current economic realities. The lagging economy has most likely resulted in increased financial pressures on families and individuals, meaning more persons today are at risk of becoming homeless than in 2008. An improving economic situation would increase the chances of reaching the target, while a continued downturn would have the opposite effect. Nonetheless, the City concurs that the goal is certainly laudable, if not specifically achievable. If cities are to achieve this goal, they need tools available to them they generally do not have today.
- **Recommendation R-05:** Innovative and effective programs developed by Cities and other organizations should be documented and replicated in other areas of the County that lack such programs.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. The City agrees that innovative and effective programs should be documented and shared with other agencies. However, each community has specific needs and resources available to meet those needs; in other words what is working in one community may not work as effectively in others. The recommendation also fails to address whether cities could absorb the cost of providing such programs; not all cities have equal resources available. Finally, the recommendation fails to recognize that the County has traditionally funded and provided such services, and seeks to shift those responsibilities to cities.



- **Recommendation R-06:** Cities that have not pursued grant funds, or have been unsuccessful in receiving them, should aggressively seek such funds.
  - **Response:** The recommendation requires further study. Searching for grant funds requires the use of resources. Why should cities that have been unsuccessful in receiving grant funds aggressively seek such funds? The recommendation, it appears, assumes that grant funds are simply “found money,” but the reality is that most grant programs require: a) significant matching funds that require the devotion of either new revenue or re-directing revenues funding other services; and b) require substantial staff time to prepare the grant application and, if awarded, the subsequent reporting for the grant; and c) many grant programs are so highly specific that they do not or would not meet the communities highest and greatest needs, and implementation of such programs could actually detract from other established services.
  
- **Recommendation R-07:** The County and Cities should continue to recognize and publicly thank the various nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and other volunteer groups for their ongoing and highly effective support of the homeless population in Ventura County.
  - **Response:** The recommendation will be implemented on an on-going basis. The City wholeheartedly agrees with the recommendation. Furthermore, the City takes this opportunity to specifically recognize two organizations that have been driving forces behind reducing homelessness and providing services to the homeless in the Ojai community: the Ojai Valley Family Shelter and HELP of Ojai. The Ojai Valley Family Shelter provides temporary shelter to the homeless during the winter months at a location which rotates among participating churches. HELP of Ojai provides an array of social services to area residents, including administration of the City’s Home Rehabilitation Program and Eviction Prevention/Lease Assistance Program, both of which serve to prevent persons from falling into homelessness.

Should you have any questions on the above, please contact me at (805) 646-5581.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jere A. Kersnar, City Manager  
City of Ojai

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of California, Ventura County  
P.O. Box 6489, Ventura, California, 93009