

Responses to Findings and Recommendations in the Grand Jury Report,  
"Homeless Should Not Mean Hopeless: Homeless Solutions Elude Local  
Leaders"

## **FINDINGS**

**F1** There is no cooperative, collaborative, and coordinated effort among all eight governments in the County to create comprehensive solutions to this shared problem.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees wholly with the finding.

Starting in August, 2021, Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) began convening the Sacramento Homeless Policy Council, at the direction of the Board of Supervisors and Sacramento City Council. This Council includes elected representatives from each of the seven cities in the County as well as the Board of Supervisors. The Council is tasked with engaging in broad-based, collaborative, and strategic discussions in response to Sacramento's homelessness crisis. In addition, in June of 2022, the County Board of Supervisors, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento Countywide Continuum of Care (CoC) Board all adopted the Sacramento Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP) which is a three year, cross-jurisdictional unified approach to addressing homelessness across Sacramento County. While the other six cities did not formally adopt the LHAP, staff of each city was involved in the creation of the plan, and three of the other cities (Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, and Rancho Cordova) have staff seated on the CoC Board which adopted the LHAP. Finally, with approximately 95% of the County's unsheltered homeless population residing in either the City of Sacramento (67%), the unincorporated County (20%) or the American River Parkway (8%) which is managed by Sacramento County, the most intense need for on-going coordination and collaboration is between the County and City of Sacramento. Recognizing this, in December of 2022, the County and City entered into a legally binding Homeless Partnership Agreement that lays out responsibilities of each jurisdiction and sets specific requirements for increased outreach and services, shelter capacity, and permanent housing over five years. City and County elected officials meet regularly in the City/County Homeless 4x2 to direct the work under the Partnership Agreement and staff of both jurisdictions meet regularly to operationalize

the Agreement. Outcomes and efforts of the Partnership Agreement are publicly shared in Board and Council workshops and on both County and City websites.

**F2** The problem of homelessness in Sacramento County has drastically worsened over the past five years, as demonstrated by the dramatic increases in Point in Time counts.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

**F3** A lack of affordable housing is the primary cause of homelessness and the most difficult one to solve due to the high cost of new development.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

National studies confirm that the most correlated factor in communities with high rates of homelessness is lack of available, affordable housing<sup>1</sup>. California has the second largest gap (only second to Hawaii) between rental rates and average worker wages.<sup>2</sup> California lacks almost 1 million affordable housing units to meet the need of low-income residents, meaning that more people are falling into homelessness due to affordability issues, and the path out of homelessness is limited due to lack of affordable housing.<sup>3</sup>

The voices of those experiencing homelessness echo these challenges; in the 2022 Sacramento Point in Time (PIT) Count, the most common thing asked for by those living unsheltered (44%) was 'more affordable housing'.

However, homelessness is also exacerbated and often extended due to other structural and personal challenges those living unsheltered face. While it is difficult to fully know which is the cause and which is the symptom, data on the homeless population also indicates disproportionate rates of behavioral health issues, chronic health conditions, involvement in the child welfare system, domestic violence, and involvement in the criminal justice system. While access to affordable housing can make treatment of these other issues

<sup>1</sup> <https://view.genial.ly/62b8abe56affd600115642f2/presentation-homelessness-is-a-housing-problemv2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ca>

<sup>3</sup> [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP\\_CA.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/SHP_CA.pdf)

easier, to truly address the causes and impacts of homelessness, it is necessary to also address these other challenges.

**F4** Sacramento Steps Forward does not have any elected leaders on its Board and lacks decision-making authority over the eight governmental jurisdictions in the County, making it powerless to implement needed changes.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with the finding.

The Board agrees that Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF) does not have any elected leaders on its Board and lacks decision-making authority over the eight governmental jurisdictions. However, the Board disagrees that SSF, therefore, is 'powerless' to implement needed changes.

SSF serves multiple roles in the County that are critical to the success of County and City initiatives, and which the County and City rely on to help effectuate change in programs directly administered by both jurisdictions:

- SSF serves as the lead applicant for the Countywide collaborative application for Continuum of Care (CoC) funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In federal fiscal year 2022 the Sacramento CoC grant was awarded \$30,512,102, and supports 33 projects, primarily permanent affordable housing projects for households exiting homelessness. SSF's oversight of this process and the resulting contracts is a critical component in our community's overall strategy to prevent and end homelessness.
- SSF serves as the operator of the Countywide Coordinated Access System (CAS). CAS is the 'front door' to virtually all County and City funded shelters and housing programs, as well as others funded privately or from other governmental partners. A strong and inclusive CAS is critical to ensuring that the most vulnerable individuals are prioritized for services, and that clients are quickly and transparently referred to the most appropriate intervention for their unique needs.
- SSF serves as the administrator of the Countywide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HMIS is the largest source of data the community has of people experiencing homelessness and programs serving them. SSF has made significant investments recently to improve the span of programs included in HMIS and the functionality of HMIS to provide community data. Without this data,

programs administered by local jurisdictions cannot be consistently measured for efficacy.

- Finally, SSF serves as the lead for implementing the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP), the County and City adopted strategic plan to address homelessness.

**F5** The legally binding agreement mandated by Measure O and the Partnership Agreement is a step in the right direction, but it applies only to the City and County of Sacramento.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding, but notes that 95% of the unsheltered homeless population per the 2022 PIT is within geographic areas that either the City or County of Sacramento are responsible for, and, therefore, subject to the Partnership Agreement.

**Recommendations:**

**R1** The 2022-2023 Sacramento County Grand Jury recommends that the County and the seven incorporated cities implement a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to address homelessness by December 1, 2023.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

As the grand jury report notes, in 2010, when the Continuum of Care (CoC) administration was leaving Sacramento County, there was consideration of forming a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to administer the CoC. At that time, creation of a JPA was deemed to not be feasible, and the CoC functions were shifted instead to a non-profit, Sacramento Steps Forward (SSF). Since this time, both the conditions around homelessness and funding available for programs and services has significantly changed. In the State's 2023-24 budget, there are new requirements for jurisdictions drawing down Homeless, Housing and Prevention (HHAP) funding for strong regional collaboration. This work will be memorialized into a regional plan that (among other things) must include: "Identification of roles and responsibilities for all participating jurisdictions regarding outreach and site coordination, siting and use of available land, the development of shelter, interim, and permanent housing options, and the coordination and connection to the delivery of services". This work which will be done collaboratively with the County, CoC and cities, will inform alternative organizational approaches, including, but not limited to the forming of a JPA.

**R2** The newly formed JPA should be governed by elected officials who are directly accountable to citizens of the County.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

The recommended research into most effective structure (R1, above), should include the roles of elected officials in the structure.

**R3** The Joint Powers Authority should develop and manage a comprehensive County-wide strategic plan to address homelessness by July 1, 2024.

Board of Supervisors Response:

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable due to new state requirements for funding that would need to be analyzed alongside implementation of the JPA, which would exceed the timeframe for additional analysis provided in the penal code.

The recommended research into most effective structure (R1, above), should lay out roles and responsibilities, including oversight of the current comprehensive County-wide strategic plan, the Local Homelessness Action Plan (LHAP).

**R4** The County/City Partnership Agreement should be used as a model for the other six cities as an interim measure pending the creation of a Joint Powers Authority.

Board of Supervisors Response:

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.

The Partnership Agreement has proven to be an effective tool for managing the responsibilities between the City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento, who, collectively, oversee 95% of the unsheltered homeless population in Sacramento. While it is important to have and maintain strong working relationships with the other six cities, the size of the issues in those cities (with Isleton and Galt having no unsheltered count in 2022) does not warrant such a formal arrangement. As research into the best overall governance structure to address homelessness is explored (R1, above), the County will explore the need for additional partnership agreements with other cities in the County.