



City of Huntington Beach

2000 MAIN STREET

CALIFORNIA 92648

Tony Strickland
Mayor

September 5, 2023

Maria Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

RE: City of Huntington Beach Response to the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report, "Welcome to the Neighborhood" Are cities responsibly managing the integration of group homes?

Honorable Judge Hernandez:

In accordance with Penal Code 933 and 933.05(a) and (b), the City of Huntington Beach submits the following response to the report, findings, and recommendations of the 2022-2023 Orange County Grand Jury Report entitled, "Welcome to the Neighborhood" Are cities responsibly managing the integration of group homes?

FINDINGS

F1. Group homes too close to one another contribute to the problems associated with overconcentration.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding.

F2. Common nuisances are more likely and disruptive when sober living homes are concentrated in a small geographic area of a neighborhood.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding.

F3. Some cities have successfully addressed and informed community members about the challenges faced in regulating group homes.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding.

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F4. Community satisfaction was minimal when cities took the traditional public comment approach towards addressing community complaints.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach is not sure what this refers to, e.g., community complaints about the issue generally or specific homes, or the City's historical response to the issue (?).

F5. Cities are not utilizing police, fire, and code enforcement complaints as a means of locating and tracking Group Homes.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach may disagree partially with the above finding. Complaints about alleged illegal activity or residential nuisances received through police and code enforcement are used to locate and track alleged illegal activity or residential nuisances until the complaint is resolved.

F6. Cities are inhibited from enacting and enforcing ordinances due to fears over the potential cost of litigation.

Response: This may be true for other cities, the City of Huntington Beach is not certain. The City of Huntington Beach has enacted and does enforce its ordinances for the benefit of both the communities in which these homes are located, but also for the safety and protection of those residents in those homes.

F7. Several cities have created an ordinance that requires a ministerial permit or registration to operate a group home, however many of these cities do not enforce their ordinances.

Response: This may be true for other cities, the City of Huntington Beach is not certain. The City of Huntington Beach has enacted and does enforce its ordinances for the benefit of both the communities in which these homes are located, but also for the safety and protection of those residents in those homes.

F8. City and County officials are deterred from regulating group homes by California Housing and Community Development's housing element approval process.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding; although, the City's current regulatory scheme was not a barrier to the City obtaining approval of its proposed Housing Element.

F9. Cities have historically strategized and acted independently in addressing group home challenges and solutions.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding.

F10. Well-operated group homes can integrate smoothly into neighborhoods.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding.

F11. There is a lack of regulatory oversight for the health and safety of residents of unlicensed group homes.

Response: The City of Huntington Beach agrees with the above finding; which is why the City's current regulatory scheme is meritorious. The City's regulations aim to protect both the communities in which the homes are located and those residents in those homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. Orange County cities and the County of Orange should address citizen concerns regarding group homes by providing an opportunity for an open dialog where an interdisciplinary panel of subject matter experts can share with attendees the challenges cities are facing in the management of group homes. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F3, F4)

Response: This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented by the City to the extent requested by the County of Orange and other Orange County cities by July 1, 2024.

R2. By December 31, 2024, Orange County cities and the County of Orange should collaborate in their efforts to create ordinances for the regulation of group homes, including the development of model ordinances. (F6, F7, F9)

Response: The City of Huntington Beach has already adopted a local ordinance.

R3. Orange County cities and the County of Orange should pool resources for defense of lawsuits challenging group home ordinances. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F6, F8, F9)

Response: The City of Huntington Beach's regulations are currently in compliance with State Law.

R4. The County of Orange and Orange County cities should create a Task Force that includes representatives from OC cities, unincorporated areas, and other entities as appropriate and charge it with the responsibility of developing a plan to generate awareness among State legislators and regulators of the need for improved regulations and management standards to ensure health and safety for Group Home residents. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F2, F10, F11)

Response: The City is willing to participate in a countywide task force to the extent requested by the County of Orange and other Orange County cities by July 1, 2024.

R5. Orange County cities and the County of Orange should modify code enforcement report data collection forms to include a searchable field that enables the identification of a residence operating as a group home. To be implemented by July 1, 2024. (F5, F7, F11)

Response: The City is willing to consider this to the extent requested by the County of Orange and other Orange County cities by July 1, 2024.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact City Manager Al Zelinka at 714-536-5202 or via email at al.zelinka@surfcity-hb.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Strickland
Mayor