



COUNTY of VENTURA

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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December 19, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: Receive a Presentation from LeSar Development Consultants Regarding Their Development of, and Recommendations in, the Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness and Provide Direction to Staff to Return with Options and Alternatives

Recommendations:

It is recommended your Board:

1. Receive a presentation from LeSar Development Consultants about the Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness (Exhibit 1); and
2. Consider the recommendations outlined in the Plan and direct staff to return to the Board with alternatives including costs, potential funding sources, and timing options for phasing implementation.

Ventura County Strategic Plan:

Strategic Priority: Address Homelessness and Lift Up the Most Vulnerable

The Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness directly addresses this priority. Together with the eight next steps contained therein, these recommendations promote short and long-term housing options with wrap-around services to foster well-being and self-sufficiency for individuals experiencing homelessness and stabilizes the safety-net by meeting basic needs for the most vulnerable members of our community.

FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact directly associated with this report. Staff will return to your Board to implement recommendations in accordance with the direction provided by your Board.

Background:

In late January of this year, your Board authorized County Executive Office staff to enter into a contract with LeSar Development Consultants, in coordination with the cities of San Buenaventura, Oxnard and Thousand Oaks (contributing \$25,000 each) at a total cost not to exceed \$175,000. The engagement included a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the homeless services system and the development of actionable recommendations that align with the current [2019 Ventura County Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#). Initially scheduled to be completed in September 2023, progress was hampered by a variety of factors including LeSar's difficulties in scheduling work groups and interviews for the qualitative analysis and having to develop workarounds for specific data requested by LeSar that was not readily available for their quantitative analysis. The ultimate product was delayed three months at no increased cost to the parties.

Discussion:

Following a series of in-person group and individual interviews, online community and provider surveys and an analysis of local data, LeSar analyzed information and identified a variety of strengths and weaknesses in our current homelessness system. The qualitative analysis included in-person and remote interviews with policymakers, focus groups with partner agencies including both housing and service providers and, as prioritized by the Board and our partner cities, persons with lived experience. Included with LeSar's quantitative analysis, was a review of our Point in Time Count trends, Homeless Management Information System data, and an assessment of current housing resources including a review of housing development currently in the pipeline. Based upon this information, the recommendations contained in the attached report are designed to enhance and improve aspects of the system that are working well, and either eliminate or ameliorate what is impeding positive outcomes by recommending next steps in accordance with their findings.

Among the system strengths, they identified a strong commitment from service providers, adoption of innovative and effective approaches including Housing First and Trauma-informed care, prioritizing the most vulnerable through the Ventura County Continuum of Care's Coordinated Entry System, and efficient utilization of temporary funding to scale interim and permanent housing options. The key weaknesses identified were an imbalance between entries and exits from the homeless service system, lack of housing resources affordable to extremely low-income households, fragmented response to unsheltered homelessness, substandard data collection and utilization, and insufficient inclusion of persons with lived experience in formulating recommendations and strategies. Both the strengths and weaknesses are discussed in greater detail in the

attached plan. Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis, LeSar identified five action areas:

- Action Area 1: Housing Prioritization & Funding
- Action Area 2: Regional Coordination & Leadership
- Action Area 3: Outreach & Service Delivery
- Action Area 4: Data-Driven Decision Making
- Action Area 5: Representation & Inclusivity

Each of the action areas includes next steps that, when implemented, will help achieve the goals within. Some recommendations address multiple action areas, as there's significant overlap and interconnectivity within the homeless services system. The following recommendations were identified in the study as having the most potential for improvement, and thus should be prioritized to move toward making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Ventura County:

1. Utilize a ratio framework to prioritize investments in permanent housing and homelessness prevention to bring the system into balance. Due to a lack of housing resources, people who have been prioritized and qualified for permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing resources have been languishing in interim housing/emergency shelters for several years.
2. Establish a permanent funding source for housing, services support, and homelessness prevention.
3. Create and hire a Homelessness Solutions Director.
4. Create and hire a Housing Solutions Director.
5. Establish a "Command Center" for coordinated multi-disciplinary team (MDT) outreach.
6. Expand and standardize engagement approaches and delivery of supportive service methodologies using person-centered models.
7. Establish a comprehensive real-time and interactive database to facilitate improved connection to services, prioritization, and tracking outcomes. Increasing the capacity of the Homeless Management Information System to provide data to inform policy, allocate resources to fill gaps, and ensure program effectiveness.
8. Prioritize persons with lived experience in planning and decision-making.

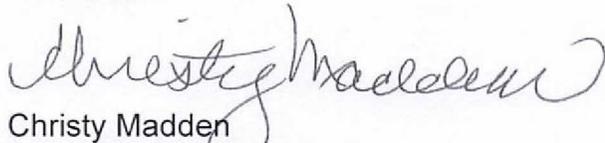
These recommendations, and the resources likely necessary for their implementation, were not estimated as a part of this study. At the Board's direction, staff would return with a series of recommendations and alternatives for your consideration. Included would be

an assessment of cost, potential resources to pay for implementation and timing options for strategically phasing their rollout. Development of this analysis and recommendations is anticipated to take approximately 60 days – the timing of which is intended to tie to development of the FY 24-25 budget.

A complete list of agencies and organizations who contributed to the development of this analysis is included on page 4. We wish to thank everyone for their time and dedication to addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

This item has been reviewed by the Auditor-Controller and County Counsel. If you have questions, please contact Mike Pettit, Christy Madden or Jennifer Harkey at 654-2864, 654-2679 and 658-4342, respectively.

Sincerely,



Christy Madden
Sr. Deputy Executive Officer



Sevet Johnson, PsyD.
County Executive Officer

- Exhibit 1: Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness
- Exhibit 2: PowerPoint Presentation