

Homelessness and Project Homekey Update

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Dear District 2 Resident,

I hope this email finds you and yours well. My thanks for your community mindedness over the last year and a half as we have grappled with the pandemic. Because of your cooperation, our County continues to lead the state in vaccination rates, low infection incidence, control of community spread, and health of our health care system. Our diligence has and will continue to pay off. Kids are back in school, business doors are staying open, and we've been able to resume a more normal level of in-person social interaction. In the very near term, more moves towards normalcy as mask mandates begin to be relaxed. Read this [press release](#) for changes that will go into effect on October 15.

As we (at least) locally, have managed to bring COVID under control, we continue to grapple with one of our county and state's toughest issues: Homelessness.

Homelessness and Housing First Update

While homelessness may be more visible in other parts of the Bay Area, homelessness is absolutely an issue for Marin as well. Over 1000 individuals were identified as homeless (living in shelters, cars, on the streets) during the [2019 Point-in-time count](#) in Marin. Of those individuals, 73% called Marin home before they lost their housing. This data is borne out by the experience of our service providers, who report that a very significant percentage of people they are supporting grew up in this county.

In 2017, the County of Marin, in concert with a coalition of service providers and local cities and towns, formally adopted "[Housing First](#)" as our approach to addressing homelessness. We did this in parallel with the local launch of "Coordinated Entry," the national best practice for solving homelessness.

Our [Housing First](#) approach prioritizes getting folks into safe, secure housing as the first critical step to addressing not only housing, but all health issues. Coordinated Entry standardizes the assessment and placement process for people experiencing homelessness in the community, streamlines housing and care across private and public agencies, and provides more effective and efficient referrals to housing. All across the country, communities are [proving it is possible](#) to end homelessness by using this strategy.

As of September, Marin marked the four-year anniversary of implementing

[Housing First](#) and Coordinated Entry have achieved a major milestone by housing the 400th person who was experiencing long-term, chronic homelessness in our community.

My thanks to everyone involved from Health and Human Services, the Marin Housing Authority, Homeward Bound of Marin, the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, Ritter Center, Downtown Streets Team, Buckelew, North Marin Community Services, Marin Community Clinics, Community Action Marin, Catholic Charities, and local cities and towns. Together, not only have we housed 400 of our most vulnerable residents, but we have also reduced veteran homelessness in Marin County by over 60%. Much more to do but taking a moment to share our collective accomplishments. Here are the numbers:

Chronic Homelessness:

- Since October 1, 2017, we have housed 400 people who were experiencing chronic homelessness.
- This September alone, we moved 11 more individuals into permanent supportive housing (PSH).
- Of the 400 housed, 93.75% are still housed, have improved health, and hope for a healthy, housed future.

Veteran Homelessness

- Since October 1, 2017, we have housed 50 homeless veterans.
- This September alone, 2 more veterans moved into housing.
- We now estimate there are only 30 veterans experiencing homelessness in Marin.

Family Homelessness

- Since June of 2020, we have housed 71 homeless families.
- This September alone, we housed 5 more families.
- We now estimate that there are approximately 34 unsheltered and 36 sheltered families experiencing homelessness in Marin.

New Opportunities: Project HomeKey

In July of 2020, the State of California launched a \$750 million program called "[Project Homekey](#)." Project Homekey was structured to help local communities rapidly acquire hotels, motels, commercial buildings, and other creative housing types in order to rapidly house people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Marin County participated in the program, receiving approximately \$8.6 million which helped us to partner in purchase of a commercial building in San Rafael and a hotel in Corte Madera. In total, these properties (once renovated for housing) will result in 63 new units of PSH.

The program was so successful that the state budgeted an additional \$1.45 billion for Homekey 2.0 in FY 2021-22, and earmarked another \$1.3 billion in 2022-23 providing critical funding and opportunity to create much needed additional permanent supportive housing here in Marin.

Potential Project Homekey Site

The County of Marin and the City of Larkspur, in partnership with [Episcopal Community Services](#) (ECS), have identified a potential [Project Homekey](#) site at the former skilled nursing facility at 1251 S. Eliseo Drive in Larkspur. The property represents a unique opportunity to revitalize an underutilized parcel and increase capacity to serve vulnerable Marin residents experiencing homelessness.

If the County and ECS do move forward with the Eliseo site, (and the State chooses to fund it as a Homekey project), it would be operated by ECS as a 43-unit, permanent supportive housing (PSH) facility for single adults experiencing homelessness. The facility would be staffed 24/7, and residents would have access to intensive case management, behavioral health services, workforce development, benefits assistance, and will receive referrals to outside community resources as needed.

Permanent supportive housing is an evidence-based housing intervention that combines affordable housing with wrap-around support services. PSH is exactly what it sounds like: permanent housing combined with support services. These support services, including case management and mental health, educational, and vocational services help residents achieve housing stability and improve health outcomes. Across the state and nation, PSH is recognized as the proven solution to chronic homelessness. It has been the key ingredient to Marin's progress in successfully housing 400 individuals over the past 4 years with a 94% success rate.

Over the coming weeks, the Eliseo opportunity will be subject to an exhaustive vetting process including due diligence, financial, and operational feasibility. ECS is currently in the process of neighborhood and stakeholder engagement and welcomes any input and feedback that the community may have in this process. They will be working with Larkspur and the County to create a community advisory group that will include representatives from the City of Larkspur, County of Marin, ECS, neighborhood stakeholders, and individuals with lived experience of homelessness. Recruitment is ongoing, and this group will begin meeting if the project is funded by the State. This in addition to community meetings beginning in mid-late October and public hearings held by the Board of Supervisors related to Project Homekey in general and candidate sites (including S. Eliseo) will provide additional opportunity for those interested to learn about and weigh in on the project.

There will be two items, (#7 & 8), at tomorrow's [Board of Supervisors meeting](#) related to this proposal which will be a good opportunity to learn more about this project

If you have questions/comments, you can contact me directly or the project team at zak@gfpublicaffairs.com.



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