

FINAL REPORT

CASE #0503 PUBLIC HOUSING/CITY OF STOCKTON

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

The 2003-2004 Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) received a complaint dated November 26, 2003. Allegations were made that San Joaquin County was remiss in not properly inspecting buildings and/or rental units prior to placement of the poor, disabled or mentally ill. The complaint further alleged that the County of San Joaquin entered into leases with landlords who provided substandard housing in high crime areas and failed to do criminal background checks of potential tenants before giving County monies for rent subsidies. The Grand Jury voted to open an investigation.

BACKGROUND:

San Joaquin County Civil Grand Juries conducted prior investigations on Public Housing in San Joaquin County in 1979-80, 1980-81 and 2000-01. A complaint dated November 5, 2001 was received questioning the inspection policies of San Joaquin County, San Joaquin County Mental Health and San Joaquin County Human Services relating to the placement of general assistance, disabled and mentally ill clients. The 2001 complaint alleged that buildings were not being inspected prior to placement of clients and they were not up to code.

Following the 1979-80 and 1980-81 reports, the City of Stockton partnered with San Joaquin County Health Department and began conducting annual hotel/motel inspections. A hotel/motel ordinance was developed in 1999.

The 2001-2002 San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury conducted an investigation of the Human Services Agency and Public Housing. They concluded that the City of Stockton Housing and Redevelopment and San Joaquin County Environmental Health agencies shared responsibility for inspecting, monitoring and citing structures for code violations. The Grand Jury also found that the City of Stockton had a disproportionate share of the cost to house low income and General Relief tenants.

Following the 2000-01 and 2001-02 reports, City Manager, Mark Lewis formed (CHAT) Community Health Action Team to address health and safety violations, property inspections and Building and Criminal Codes. Mr. Lewis adopted a zero tolerance approach to violations and in 2002 implemented a training program for operators and managers of hotels/motels. A Fire Sprinkler and Smoke Detector Ordinance was specifically drafted for downtown hotels and put in place in 2002.

ANALYSIS:

San Joaquin County Mental Health works with other county agencies to meet the needs of residents with mental health issues and other disabilities. The county provides rental assistance through voucher programs and is actively involved in placement of the mentally ill, disabled and low-income residents in affordable housing.

Over the years citizens of Stockton have expressed concern that mentally ill, disabled and low-income residents are being housed in the downtown area and are being preyed upon by criminal elements resulting in an increase in drug dealing and robberies. The Grand Jury met with City Manager, Mark Lewis and Lt. Dennis Smallie of the Stockton Police Department. We received and reviewed statistical information confirming a high concentration of low-income units in the downtown area. A review of crime statistics showed there was a disproportionate number of medium to high risk parolees and sex offenders in several downtown residential districts.

The City has formed a multi-disciplinary group called Community Health Action Team (CHAT) to run police service calls, filter calls related to a specific problem, identify target areas with the most activity and concentrate on rehabilitating affected neighborhoods. Bike patrols have increased and six officers have been permanently assigned to the downtown areas. The City provided documentation supporting reduced criminal activity in targeted residential districts since the formation of CHAT. Stockton Police statistics show there was a 27% decrease in crime since CHAT was implemented compared to a 16% increase city wide.

The University of the Pacific runs a community re-entry program providing mentally disabled clients skills training and independent living skills. The Martin Gipson Socialization Center is a drop-in center for the mentally disabled with a primary objective of providing opportunities to learn social, recreational, leisure time and health-related behaviors. The center gives clients part-time employment opportunities and assists with work readiness. Two satellite apartment complexes designed to maintain independent living within the community are located in the downtown area and emphasize medication compliance. Members of Safe Neighborhood Action Group (SNAG) felt this program was a positive contribution to the community and should be modeled by other programs.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

- The Grand Jury reviewed the original complaint submitted on November 26, 2003. The Grand Jury reviewed correspondence, complaints and allegations related to housing the disabled, mentally ill, low-income and General Relief clients in the downtown area.

- The Grand Jury reviewed The Hotel/ Motel & Residential Hotel/Motel Manager's Training Program. The Grand Jury reviewed district crime rates for targeted downtown areas and police statistics on parolees and sex offenders in core residential districts.
- The Grand Jury interviewed the following:

Mr. Allan Pettet, Coordinator of Safe Neighborhood Action Group (SNAG)

Mark Lewis, City Manager for City of Stockton

Lt. Dennis Smallie, Stockton Police Department and former member of CHAT

Ms. Lynne Goodwin, CHAT

Complainant

Mr. Terry Hull, President Property Management Experts

Mr. Todd Fabian, Director of Martin Gipson Socialization Center

Supervisor Steve Gutierrez, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors

FINDINGS:

The Grand Jury found that:

1. The City of Stockton has taken specific steps to address crime, including adopting pan handling, shopping cart, and pay telephone ordinances and creating Police and Corrections Team (PACT), whose goal is to reduce recidivism.
2. The City of Stockton has aggressively identified parolees and sex offenders in concentrated downtown areas and arranged for arrests of violators.
3. Calls for City of Stockton Police services have been reduced by 11% in core residential districts from 2000 to 2003.
4. Calls for City of Stockton Police services have been reduced by 61% in downtown hotels from 2000 to 2003.
5. The number of sexual offenders and parolees has been reduced by 73% and 84% respectively from July 2001 to March 2004 in core residential downtown districts.
6. Stockton Police statistics show residential districts 104 and 105 have seen a 60% decrease in crime from 1993 to 2003 compared to a 10% increase city wide.
7. The City of Stockton has entered into multiple partnerships utilizing City, Federal and private monies to revitalize the downtown Stockton area.
8. There is a high concentration of parolees and sex offenders in downtown residential districts. (See Attachment 1)
9. Rental inspections are not being conducted on board and care homes, halfway houses or treatment houses with less than six units.

10. The Grand Jury found the Gipson Center at Holt House is doing a commendable job with their programs. The center is a day program that is designed to socialize clients back into society.
11. The City of Stockton is working diligently to address issues of blight, abandoned vehicles, police service calls and code enforcement for downtown hotels and motels.
12. The Grand Jury found County inspections are generally driven on a complaint basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Grand Jury strongly recommends that the City of Stockton complete the map showing all halfway houses, treatment centers and board and care homes. Limitations should be placed on the number of facilities allowed within a certain radius to avoid neighborhood saturation. It is further recommended these facilities notify the City and have appropriate permits or licenses prior to opening.
2. The Grand Jury recommends San Joaquin County inspect all rental housing prior to placing General Relief or mentally ill tenants in a unit.
3. The Grand Jury recommends County Mental Health case managers adopt a proactive approach to case management by making field visits to their clients to ensure their safety and well being. It is further recommended that an enforcement officer be available through County Mental Health to assist with inspections and make referrals to law enforcement agencies as needed.
4. The Grand Jury strongly recommends the City of Stockton expand the CHAT Assigned Downtown Hotel/Motel Apartment list to include buildings with less than six units.
5. The Grand Jury recommends the County maintain a list of addresses where Mental Health and General Relief clients are placed and where the county subsidizes rent. This list should be made available in an effort to avoid saturation to a given neighborhood.
6. The Grand Jury strongly recommends the City of Stockton contact a landlord or property owner when a police service call is received on a continuous basis at their properties.
7. The Grand Jury recommends placing satellite mental health clinics in neighborhoods that have a high concentration of mental health clients. On site case managers could be placed in large apartment complexes that house mental health clients.

RESPONSE REQUIRED:

Pursuant to Section §933.05 of the Penal Code:

The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors shall report to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin Superior Court, in writing and within 90 days of publication of this report, with a response to Recommendation #2, 3, 5 and 7, as follows:

As to each finding in the report a response indicating one of the following:

- a. The respondent agrees with the finding.
- b. The respondent disagrees with the finding, with an explanation of the reasons therefore.

As to each recommendation, a response indicating one of the following:

- The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken.
- The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be with a time frame for implementation.
- The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation of the scope of the analysis and a time frame not to exceed (6) six months.
- The recommendation will not be implemented, with an explanation therefore.

The City of Stockton shall report to the Presiding Judge of the San Joaquin Superior Court, in writing and within 90 days of publication of this report, with a response to Recommendation #1, 4, and 6, as follows:

As to each finding in the report a response indicating one of the following:

- a. The respondent agrees with the finding.
- b. The respondent disagrees with the finding, with an explanation of the reasons therefore.

As to each recommendation, a response indicating one of the following:

- a. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary of the action taken.
- b. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be with a time frame for implementation.
- c. The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation of the scope of the analysis and a time frame not to exceed (6) six months.
- d. The recommendation will not be implemented, with an explanation therefore.