



CITY OF ATASCADERO

August 16, 2019

Henry Rible, Foreperson
San Luis Obispo Grand Jury
PO Box 4910
San Luis Obispo, CA 93403

RE: "Affordable Housing, An Urgent Problem For Our Community" *and* "Inspection Report for San Luis Obispo County Law Enforcement and Detention Facilities."

Dear Foreperson Rible,

In response to your request for responses regarding the findings and recommendations for the above referenced Grand Jury reports, this letter will serve as the City of Atascadero's response.

Attached, please find the responses to each finding and recommendation required to be answered by the City of Atascadero. These responses have been prepared by the Atascadero City Manager Rachelle Rickard and Atascadero Police Chief Jerel Haley.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Chief Haley or I should you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Lara Christensen
Deputy City Manager, City of Atascadero

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: "Affordable Housing, An Urgent Problem For Our Community"

Report Date: June 18, 2019

Response by: Rachelle Rickard **Title:** City Manager

FINDINGS

1. I (we) agree with the findings numbered: _____
2. I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F6, F7
(Attach a statement specifying any portions of the findings that are disputed; include an explanation of the reasons.)

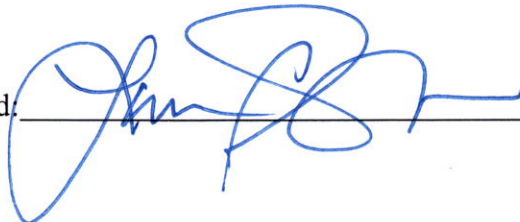
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations numbered R1, R2, R4, R5, R6 have been implemented.
(Attach a summary describing the implementation actions.)
2. Recommendations numbered _____ have not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.
(Attach a timeframe for the implementation.)
3. Recommendations numbered _____ require further analysis.
(Attach an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or director of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of the publication of the Grand Jury report.)
4. Recommendations numbered _____ will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.
(Attach an explanation.)

Date: 08/16/2019

Number of pages attached: 2

Signed: _____



“Affordable Housing, An Urgent Problem For Our Community”

F6. Most of the required annual housing element updates are difficult to access by the public.

Housing Elements are updated based on the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle as determined by HCD. The most recent cycle, the 5th cycle, was a four-year cycle that ran 2014-2019. The next cycle, the 6th cycle, will run 2020-2028. Government Code §65400 requires that each city prepare an annual progress report on the status of the housing element of its general plan and progress towards its implementation and submit this annual progress report to HCD. HCD posts all of the data on their website. The progress report can also be found on the Planning Commission and City Council agenda packets, which are published on the City website. Atascadero will add links to the HCD website as well as a pdf of the progress report on our website.

F7. The length and cost of the building permitting process is a major barrier to the construction of all housing, especially low income housing.

The building permit process is set up to ensure compliance with the California Building and Fire Codes in order to protect public health and safety. The City of Atascadero recognizes that the time and cost of building permits impacts all housing production. Understanding the importance of this issue the City of Atascadero continues to have the lowest fees and quickest processing time in the County. The City has undertaken a number of proactive steps over the past few years to actively address these concerns, including:

1. Implement a new permit tracking system, which facilitates easier permit application, retrieval, and processing.
2. Maintaining a permit screening process that reduces plan check review time.
3. Consulting with a new construction plan check service who is dedicated to streamlining the process and reducing costs to the applicant.

R1. Reassess and improve processes to fast-track building and planning permit approvals within 12 months from date of application. This should be implemented within FY 2019-2020.

Approval of building and planning permits is a collaboration between the City and the individual/professional submitting the application. The City has no control over the completeness of the application, whether the application complies with State and local codes, nor the timeliness of any submittals. The City does have control over the time it takes to review any submittals from the applicant. The current process for review and approval of residential construction projects in the City of Atascadero is 4-6 weeks for the first review, 2-4 weeks for a 2nd review (if necessary) culminating in the final approval of most building permits within three months.

Planned Developments with a larger volume of housing require more complicated review and approval due to the environmental and General Plan amendment

processes required by the State of California. Even given this more complex and time-consuming process, the City of Atascadero still maintains the quickest processing time in the County.

R2. Create, file, and publish the required housing element documents and reports on time and in a form easily accessible to the public. This should be done by the next report cycle.

The City has historically filed the reports in a timely manner; however, the City was unable to file the report due in 2019 on time due to implementation of new permit tracking software utilized by the Community Development Department. There was a delay in the City's ability to report the information to HCD; however, the City was in contact with HCD letting them know of the 3-week delay and the reason for the delay. The software has since been successfully implemented and updated to prevent delays in the future and the City will be back on track for the next reporting cycle. The City reports information in the template required by HCD and posts this information on the City's website.

R4. The cities and County should concentrate on promoting rentals for families earning below moderate incomes by increasing the percentage of required inclusionary housing units.

The City of Atascadero's inclusionary housing policy requires all developers of discretionary projects to provide affordable housing at one of the highest percentages in the County and at a percentage that is approximately twice the percentage required by the State. The City has had substantial success in facilitating affordable housing and production of total affordable housing has exceeded RHNA housing targets in total for current RHNA period. The City will be updating the inclusionary housing policy as part of the 2019 Housing Element update.

R5. Increase the opportunities through re-zoning for non-traditional housing options, such as modular homes, pre-fabricated homes, and mobile home parks. This should be accomplished within FY 2020-2021.

The City is currently in the process of updating the 2019 Housing Element. This includes reviewing a full range of "non-traditional" options to improve affordable housing production and the creation of housing that is affordable by design.

R6. The cities and County should detail their specific plans to engage the public in the formulation of the 2020-2028 Housing Plan Update.

As the City continues to work through the 2019 Housing Element update process, public participation will be a large component of that process.