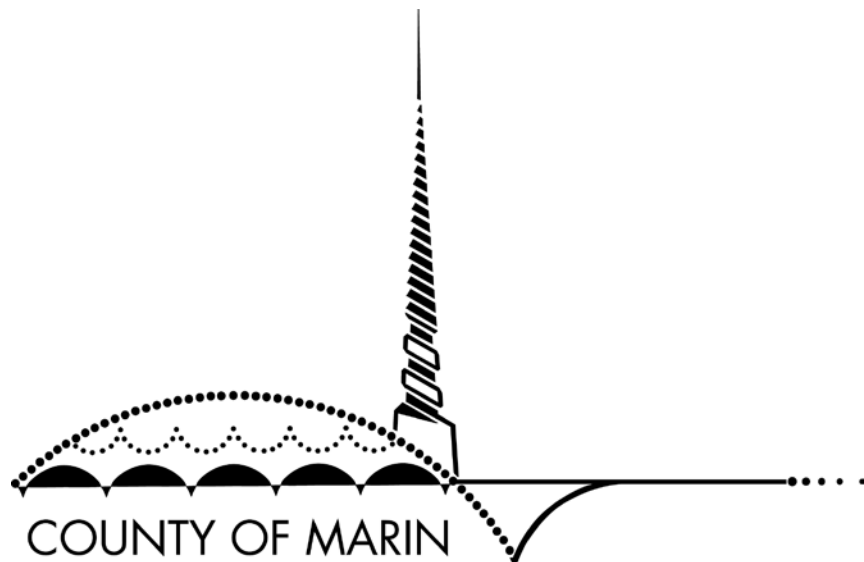
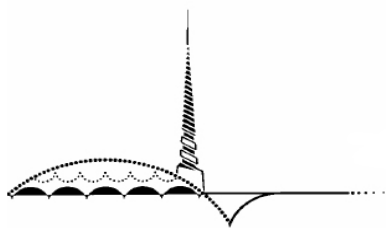


**2014/2015 MARIN COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY**

## **Homelessness in Marin—A Call for Leadership**

**Report Date: April 20, 2015**  
**Public Release Date: April 23, 2015**





## **Homelessness in Marin – A Call for Leadership**

### **SUMMARY**

Right now in Marin County people are lying in doorways, living in cardboard boxes in open spaces and sleeping under freeway overpasses. Being homeless is harsh, even in Marin. In the absence of a government mandate to eliminate homelessness, County leadership does not show any urgency to find and create real solutions. The current approach is not effective; too many Marin County residents are still homeless and the negative economic impact is substantial.

The Grand Jury conducted a six-month investigation that included interviews, research, and attendance at community meetings and homeless support centers. Based on this investigation, the Grand Jury recommends that the Marin County Board of Supervisors takes a strong, decisive leadership role in eliminating homelessness. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Chief Administrative Officer to appoint a high-ranking official with the authority to develop and execute a systemic plan to end homelessness and be accountable for the progress of that plan. This official should reorganize budgets so that all expenditures are aligned to the plan and transparent to the public and s/he should closely coordinate the activities of the various service providers.

Additionally, the Grand Jury believes the total economic impact of homelessness in Marin County must be established and known by the public; costs incurred by the staffs of the public safety agencies (e.g., police, fire, public works, district attorney, public defender, jail and hospitals) and the negative impact on business activity must be included. The Grand Jury believes the total economic impact of homelessness in Marin is far in excess of the \$15 million per year that the County reports spending. (See Appendix C.) A recent Request for Proposal issued by the County estimated that, in just one year, 34 chronic inebriates, 32 of whom were homeless, cost the County \$2,039,463,<sup>1</sup> or \$59,984 per person, in public safety services.

The Grand Jury found that municipalities throughout Marin County direct the homeless to San Rafael where the majority of support services are located, creating a hub for the homeless in that city. The resulting negative impact of homelessness on business activity

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronic Alcohol Use with Justice-System Involvement Report*. Report. San Rafael: Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, 2013. HomeBase - Legal and Technical Assistance.

and the overall quality of life in San Rafael should impel the County to assume leadership and work closely with San Rafael to eliminate homelessness.

The Grand Jury believes that, despite the absence of a government mandate, there is a moral and economic imperative for the Board of Supervisors to undertake a strong leadership role to eliminate homelessness in Marin County.

## BACKGROUND

Numerous Marin County residents describe an increased presence of the homeless on the streets of San Rafael in recent years. This is frustrating residents and negatively impacting business activities and the overall quality of life for many. The human suffering is clearly visible to people driving or walking through portions of San Rafael. Fellow Marinites are lying in doorways, sleeping under freeway overpasses and living in cardboard boxes in open spaces. How many more are suffering who we cannot see? Is this acceptable in Marin County? Local media reports and on-line sites have called attention to this issue. With this background, the Grand Jury reviewed the 1994, 2009 and 2011 Marin County Grand Jury reports and concluded that a new investigation was warranted.

## METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury conducted a six-month investigation that included more than 25 interviews with Marin County and city officials, nonprofit service providers, volunteers, planners, clergy, police and homeless individuals. The Grand Jury studied reports on homelessness in Marin County and other regions, reviewed numerous articles from the Marin Independent Journal, San Francisco Chronicle and other periodicals, and considered various on-line sources. The Grand Jury also conducted on-site visits to numerous homeless support facilities, attended a homeless support group and dinner, and attended a number of public meetings concerning homelessness.

## DISCUSSION

Homelessness persists in Marin County. The *2013 Marin Point in Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness* was required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a condition for receipt of federal funding for the homeless. During the 2013 one-day count, 933 individuals and persons in families were counted as homeless, and 4,388 people were counted as “precariously housed.”<sup>2</sup>

Most people the Grand Jury interviewed believe that the numbers were actually much

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<sup>2</sup> See definition in Appendix A, page 15.

higher.<sup>3</sup> A *Program of the Lucille Packard Foundation*,<sup>4</sup> reported that 1,596 public school students in Marin County were homeless at some point during the 2012-13 school year.

Homelessness is a complex social issue with no simple solution. First, the homeless population is not homogeneous. The *2013 Marin Point in Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness* identifies the following subgroups: 1) Literally Homeless; 2) Precariously Housed; 3) Chronically Homeless; 4) Disabling Condition; 5) Other Homeless Populations. (See Appendix A for the full text of the definitions.) In human terms, examples include the mother and two children fleeing domestic abuse, an elderly man who can no longer afford his rent, a young person aged out of foster care, families living in cars, a mentally ill woman, a chronic inebriate and a middle-aged man who prefers to live outside as a life-style choice. Some characterize the homeless population as those who “cannot, have not or will not.” However the homeless are characterized, many of those interviewed stated that there is no single strategy or solution that will work for all.

Second, people have different opinions about how society should address homelessness. Some feel we must give a “hand out,” while others embrace a “hand up” out of homelessness. Still others simply want the homeless out of their doorways, parks and open spaces. The sight of a homeless person defecating in the doorway of a downtown business engenders feelings of revulsion to many; to many others, compassion. These differences often create friction in our communities as how best to proceed. Regardless of their feelings, most people indicated to the Grand Jury that the homeless should not be on the streets and that the current approach in Marin County is not effective. Many citizens and public officials interviewed opined that in a county as compassionate and affluent as Marin, there must be a better solution for the homeless.

Third, the uneven geographic distribution of the homeless further complicates the picture. For most Marin residents, homelessness is not visible and does not impact their lives. While authorities in several jurisdictions reported some homeless (e.g., Sausalito reports five to ten homeless in addition to approximately 200 anchor-outs who do not consider themselves homeless; Novato reports approximately 8-10 homeless living in encampments; homeless encampments exist in Corte Madera), overall they shared that they are able to “manage” their homeless in order to minimize any negative impact. However, the majority of the homeless in Marin are located in San Rafael where there are

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<sup>3</sup> The 2015 Point In Time count occurred on the night of January 28 and the daytime of January 29, 2015. The Grand Jury learned that, because many of the grant amounts awarded by the government are based on the number of homeless counted in the Point In Time, Marin County retained a consultant to assist with this year’s count to ensure that it was as accurate as possible. This year’s count will be public in April and the full report will be available in early summer 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Kidsdata.org, <http://www.kidsdata.org/>.

too many to be “managed,” negatively impacting business activity and the quality of life. This uneven geographic impact leads to questions about how to share the responsibility to find and implement a solution.

The Grand Jury found that four related issues must be addressed:

- Leadership void
- Hidden economic impact of homelessness
- Expanded stakeholder collaboration
- Disproportionate burden on San Rafael

These four issues relate to the overall approach to homelessness in Marin County. Six other issues came up repeatedly in the Grand Jury’s investigation. All of them relate to specific components of the homeless services being provided, but are beyond the scope of this investigation and are discussed in Appendix B. It is noteworthy that while these issues are important, the continued focus on them by so many of those interviewed by the Grand Jury is reactive and distracts from the development and execution of a systemic plan to eliminate homelessness.

### Leadership Void

The Grand Jury found no clear, comprehensive leadership to end homelessness in Marin County. No person or entity is responsible or accountable for solutions. One high-ranking Marin County official noted that no one has to be in charge since “...there is no government mandate to eliminate homelessness” and indicated that, essentially, “the problem does not have to be solved.” The Grand Jury found no sense of urgency by the County and several of those interviewed suggested that, in fact, the County does not want to assume responsibility because it is afraid to fail. Many others said that, “we are all accountable.” One person summed it up by noting, “I pay taxes and elect officials to address these issues.”

In Marin County, the approach to homelessness is unfocused, decentralized, and reactive to the “issue of the day.” The County, mainly through the Department of Health and Human Services (H&HS), receives state and federal grants and contracts with non-profits to provide services to the homeless. Although important services are being provided, it is a patchwork approach that has evolved over time to address the needs as they come to light.

Currently, the County has a *10-year Plan for Reducing Homelessness* as required by HUD as a condition for receiving federal funds. The Grand Jury was disappointed that the plan was described by one of the highest-ranking officials in the County as “aspirational” – a plan for the sake of having a plan and not for achieving results.

Everyone interviewed acknowledged that the County is doing more than it has in the past. The 2009 Grand Jury report recommended that the County hire someone to oversee the programs. A Homeless Policy Analyst is now in place, whose job it is to advise on best

practices and to help coordinate the activities of non-profits that are providing services to the homeless. By all accounts, the Policy Analyst is hardworking, experienced, and dedicated. However, several people noted that the Policy Analyst position has no authority. As stated by one high-ranking official, “Having a meeting is not leadership.”

The County must assume the leadership role to eliminate homelessness. It is the **only** political entity that represents all of the residents of Marin. It is the **only** entity with the political power to coordinate all efforts on behalf of the homeless in Marin. It is the **only** entity that manages the delivery of social services to the homeless through its contracts with non-profit providers.

The local municipalities in Marin County are not in a position to assume the leadership role. These municipalities do not directly provide social services and expecting them to do so would be a tremendous duplication of effort and expense. As reported to the Grand Jury, these local municipalities “manage their homeless” by essentially moving the homeless out of their towns and often to San Rafael. This is not a solution.

***What does leadership entail?*** Leaders with authority “own” the problem. They develop and implement solutions and are accountable for success and failure. The Marin County Board of Supervisors must publicly accept and assume the leadership role by undertaking accountability for the development and execution of a systemic plan to eliminate homelessness. All efforts should be directed toward the achievement of that goal and all programs and expenditures should be analyzed to ensure that they are aligned with that goal. There should be measurable means of assessing progress and the results of these assessments should be made public on a regular basis. If insufficient progress has been made, the programs should be re-examined and appropriate modifications should be implemented. Effective leadership requires a determination of which programs are enabling homelessness and which are working towards eliminating homelessness.

The Board of Supervisors should direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to appoint a high-ranking official with the authority to implement a systemic plan. This official will be accountable to develop and execute a systemic plan to end homelessness. The Grand Jury believes this position must report to the CAO to give it the scope and authority necessary to coordinate all efforts in the County towards implementation of the systemic plan to eliminate homelessness in Marin.

As noted earlier, the majority of homeless support services available in Marin County are provided by various non-profits pursuant to contracts with the County. Effective leadership will require a tightly managed coordination of the subcontractors to prevent duplication of services and unproductive competition. These multiple independently funded programs in Marin must operate consistent with the systemic plan. Each contract must be viewed in terms of how the expenditures align to eliminate homelessness. Currently, metrics are available for individual programs, but not for the County’s overall progress. Such metrics for the program’s overall progress toward the goal of eliminating homelessness must be established. And the public must be informed.

Many of the interviewed public officials repeatedly referred to the futility of trying to eliminate homelessness in Marin County. The issues raised most frequently were the lack of availability and affordability of locations for shelters, services and housing and the fear that if Marin offers more or better programs, homeless people will flock here from outside the County to take advantage of those programs. These concerns are real, but they must not stop our public officials from moving forward towards eliminating homelessness. These are hurdles to be overcome. If they are viewed as obstacles, no progress will be made. The County must grapple with its challenges and find the solutions that work for Marin.

The Grand Jury acknowledges that the goal of eliminating homelessness is difficult to achieve. Even if the County were able to offer housing and suitable services to all, some people would elect not to accept them because they have adopted homelessness as a lifestyle choice. Even with excellent preventive programs in place, people may still slip through the safety net and become homeless. The Grand Jury believes it is important for public officials to set the bar high to eliminate homelessness. It is too easy to be distracted by the complexity of this issue and the difficulty of developing and executing real solutions. Leadership requires creativity and tenacity.

#### Hidden Economic Impact of Homelessness

The Grand Jury could not identify anyone who comprehends the total economic impact of homelessness in Marin County. Certainly, the impact of homelessness is significantly more than the \$15 million the County reports spending. (See Appendix C for the County's report.) The Grand Jury believes that if the total impact were known, the need for leadership and real solutions would be further reinforced.

In fact, the ancillary and associated costs are staggering and remain unknown. The Grand Jury learned there are three categories of economic impact associated with the homeless: 1) costs of maintaining the homeless, which is generally the combined budgets of the non-profits and the relevant portions of the County budget; 2) costs of other public services, including police, fire, district attorney (DA), public defender (PD), jail, public works and hospital visits; 3) the negative impact on business activity, including loss of business in the downtown areas, which leads to fewer jobs and less tax revenue.<sup>5</sup>

There is no comprehensive budget. The County reports spending approximately \$15 million per year on homelessness. The Grand Jury attempted to dissect the \$15 million with little success due to inexact reporting of funds attributed to homelessness, funds carried over from year to year, and a clear lack of detail.

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<sup>5</sup> Marin Economic Forum. *Room to Live, The Economics of Mitigating Individual Homelessness in Marin County*. Report. San Rafael: Prepared by Marin Economic Forum for Ritter Center, 2012.

***How much does the County really spend?*** It is impossible to tell. In many cases, the contracts with the providers are not limited to services for the homeless. For example, a contract with a non-profit provider for mental health services includes services for clients who are homeless as well as those who are not, making it more difficult to determine how much is being spent on the homeless versus on mental health services for others.

Many of the non-profits receiving funds from the County also receive funds from other sources. How much money, from all sources, is being spent on the homeless in Marin? How much is being spent per homeless person? How much is being spent on services versus shelter, what percentage goes to administrative costs, and how much is spent helping the homeless as opposed to helping people out of homelessness? The Grand Jury found no answers to these questions.

Real leadership is seeing the big picture, ensuring others see it, building a shared vision, and acting to achieve results -- and not focusing mainly on the immediate problems. Many of those interviewed noted that spending decisions are reactive to grant and government mandates, categorical funding, and political pressures. In the absence of a systemic plan to end homelessness, the door is open for politics to come into play. These pressures make it all the more important to have a systemic plan to guide decision-making.

***How much is being spent in the County on other public services involving the homeless?*** Again, it is not clear. A February 2013 report prepared by HomeBase estimated that 34 chronic inebriates, 32 of whom were homeless, cost Marin County \$2,039,463, <sup>6</sup> or \$59,984 per person, in other public services in one year. This cost included numerous interactions among the police, fire, DA, PD, jail and hospitals and each homeless person. This category of costs impacts the County and all the local jurisdictions. For example, Novato reported that their public works department spent approximately \$41,000 in one weekend cleaning up one homeless encampment. If 34 chronic inebriates cost more than \$2 million dollars in public safety services in one year, the total cost of all of the public safety services used by all the homeless is far in excess of that number. An estimate of the total economic impact of homelessness in Marin must include all of these costs.

***How do the homeless impact business activity?*** In August 2012, Marin Economic Forum prepared a report for The Ritter Center entitled *Room to Live, The Economics of Mitigating Individual Homeless in Marin County*.

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<sup>6</sup> *Chronic Alcohol Use with Justice-System Involvement Report*. Report. San Rafael: Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, 2013. HomeBase - Legal and Technical Assistance.



The estimates show that if we focus only on the downtown areas in Novato, Sausalito and San Rafael, **the losses may be as much as \$30 million per year in terms of revenue not generated** (emphasis supplied). This assumes one percent of business revenue is unattainable for local businesses due to individual homeless driving away customers. If regained, one percent more revenue to these areas would also support over 216 jobs annually across many sectors and over \$3.3 million in local and state tax revenue for city and county governments in Marin County.<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, the economic impact of homelessness in Marin County is far greater than the \$15 million reportedly spent by the County. The County must determine the total economic impact of homelessness. This is responsible leadership. The Grand Jury believes that the total amount will be so high that the public will demand action.

#### Expanded Stakeholder Collaboration

The staffs of the police, fire, jail, public works, DA, PD and hospitals all interact regularly with the homeless in Marin County. In fact, all the County and local public safety officials the Grand Jury interviewed were in contact with the homeless on a regular basis. In many cases, the police are the first responders with the homeless. Because of this experience, these groups must be an integral component of the response to solving homelessness, and must be included in the planning, coordination of services, and implementation of the systemic plan.

#### Disproportionate Burden on San Rafael

Homelessness is a major issue in San Rafael, having the largest population of homeless in the County. The city's officials are concerned that the number of homeless people on the streets of San Rafael is harming business and the overall quality of life for many residents. The *2013 Marin Point in Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness* reported that approximately 48% of the homeless in the 2013 count were located in San Rafael. Nineteen percent did not state a location, leaving open the possibility that the numbers in San Rafael could be much higher than reported. Additionally, 79% of the precariously housed are in San Rafael.

San Rafael has identified homelessness as a high priority issue and reports spending roughly \$1 million per year, including funding for the Downtown Streets Team, a mental health officer and the library security guard. San Rafael has designated a member of the City Council as the point person on this issue, has hired a homeless coordinator and has identified San Rafael's goals as reducing the number of homeless, reducing the number of service calls and creating a welcoming atmosphere for the public. San Rafael needs the County to assume leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> Marin Economic Forum. *Room to Live, The Economics of Mitigating Individual Homelessness in Marin County*. Report. San Rafael: Prepared by Marin Economic Forum for Ritter Center, 2012, 3.

San Rafael also has the majority of services available in Marin County for the homeless, including The Ritter Center, The St. Vincent de Paul Society, Mill Street Center and the Helen Vine Detox Center. The Ritter Center and St. Vincent are located near each other in downtown San Rafael. Several of the public safety officials interviewed from other towns stated that they are directing homeless people to the services in San Rafael, in some cases dropping them off there. Additionally, when the Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (REST) is operating, forty homeless men are picked up each night at various locations throughout Marin and brought for dinner and shelter to a participating congregation in the County. Then, at 6:00 AM the following morning, those forty men are dropped off in downtown San Rafael at the St. Vincent de Paul Society for breakfast. Essentially, they are left in San Rafael for 12 hours, until the 6:00 PM pick-up. This practice has created a hub for the homeless in San Rafael.

Virtually everyone interviewed commented about whether the homeless are in San Rafael because the services are located there, or vice versa. There is no answer. It is time to stop debating this question and find workable solutions to these real problems faced by San Rafael.

One high-ranking San Rafael official opined that San Rafael has been left to deal with these issues without adequate assistance from the County, stating that “San Rafael has the homeless and the County has the \$14 million.” Those interviewed by the Grand Jury stated that cooperation between the County and San Rafael is improving, but it is far from satisfactory. Most recently, San Rafael temporarily closed Boyd Park because of the problems associated with the homeless in the park, and also convinced a local storeowner to stop selling cheap liquor. These dramatic efforts are not long-term solutions. San Rafael would work closely with the County to find long-term solutions, if the County were to demonstrate the necessary leadership.

## FINDINGS

- F1. There is no coordinated, focused, systemic plan with a comprehensive budget to eliminate homelessness in Marin County.
- F2. Marin County has hired a Homeless Policy Analyst who coordinates activities but has no authority as the lead position on homelessness.
- F3. The funds Marin County reports spending on homelessness are not in a comprehensive budget, making it impossible for the public to know how and what funds are being spent to address homelessness.
- F4. Decisions about expenditures for the homeless are often reactive to government mandates or political pressure.
- F5. The majority of the homeless in Marin County are centered in San Rafael, which negatively impacts business activity and the overall quality of life in that community.

- F6. The majority of the homeless services in Marin County are located in San Rafael, prompting other towns to direct the homeless to those services.
- F7. The total economic impact of homelessness in Marin County is not known, including the impact on business activity and the costs of public safety services (e.g. police, fire, public works, district attorney, public defender, jail and hospitals), making it impossible for the public to know that the full economic impact is significantly greater than perceived.
- F8. Multiple public agencies in Marin County (e.g. police, fire, public works, district attorney, public defender, jail and hospitals) interact with the homeless regularly, but do not participate in the collaboration on homelessness, so their valuable experience is not part of the planning.

## | RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Marin County Board of Supervisors assumes the leadership role and accountability for development and execution of a systemic plan to end homelessness in the County that includes all relevant stakeholders.
- R2. The Marin County Board of Supervisors directs the Chief Administrative Officer to recruit a high-ranking official with the authority to implement the systemic plan to end homelessness. This official should report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer and should be held accountable for the results of the plan.
- R3. The Marin County Board of Supervisors requires a comprehensive County budget for homelessness that is clear to the public and includes revenues and expenditures from all departments and sources.

## REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests the following to respond:

- The Marin County Board of Supervisors: All Findings and Recommendations.
- The Mayor of the City of San Rafael: F1, F5, F6, and F7.

The governing body indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

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<sup>8</sup> Reports issued by the Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person, or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Grand Jury investigation.

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## APPENDIX A

### 2013 MARIN POINT IN TIME COUNT OF PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESS

**Literally Homeless** – *A person sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (including living on the streets, in an abandoned building, or in a vehicle), or residing in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program.*

**Other Homeless Populations** – *Any person in jail or an institution who would not have a permanent address after release or “literally homeless” prior to incarceration; any person who stayed temporarily with family or friends due to loss of housing and identified themselves as homeless on the day of the count; any person living in a hotel/motel; and any person in a hospital but homeless prior to admission.*

**Precariously Housed** – *A person is considered precariously housed and at risk of homelessness if they are about to lose housing and have no other place to live, or are housed but living temporarily with friends or family because they lack the resources and/or support networks to retain or obtain permanent housing and/or are housed but have moved frequently due to economic reasons and/or living in severely overcrowded housing.*

**Chronically Homeless** – *A person who is living in a place not meant for human habitation (car, street, camp) or emergency shelter and has been homeless for one year*

*or more or has had at east four episodes of homelessness in the past three years and has a recognized disabling condition.*

**Disabling Condition** - *A disabling condition is defined as “a diagnosable substance abuse disorder, a serious mental illness (as defined by HUD), a developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions.” In addition, “a disabling condition limits an individual’s ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.”*

## APPENDIX B CURRENT ISSUES NOT COVERED IN THIS REPORT

### Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

The HMIS is required by HUD as part of the Continuum of Care to receive federal grants for the homeless. It is “a computerized system that allows participating agencies to record and store client level information on the characteristics and service needs of persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.”<sup>9</sup> Clearly, this is a valuable asset for tracking outcomes, measuring program effectiveness, developing budgets and providing a clear picture of the extent and scope of homelessness. The County is changing data systems and projects that the new system will be operational in March, 2015. It is important that all providers fully participate in the data collection and that the public safety services are included, subject to the appropriate privacy constraints. County-level leadership with a clear focus is needed to ensure that the potential of this valuable resource is fully utilized.

### The Ritter Center Lease

The Ritter Center is the primary provider of day services for the homeless in Marin County, including showers, laundry facilities, food, clothing, and mailboxes. There is also a health center that sees approximately 3,000 people per year. The Ritter Center encompasses several buildings in downtown San Rafael near the transit depot and has three different leases, all of which expire at different times in the next two years. The relationship between the Ritter Center and San Rafael has been rocky owing to the impact of the clients on the surrounding area. Both the leadership of the Ritter Center and San Rafael said publicly that the Ritter Center should find a new location. This has proven to be very difficult. It appears that no landlord is willing to rent to the Ritter Center and the Ritter Center cannot afford to purchase property. If the Ritter Center is unable to find a new location, what happens to the people who depend on the Ritter Center? No doubt, some hope that they would simply move out of San Rafael. On the other hand, they may simply stay on the streets of San Rafael without services. County-level leadership with a clear focus must work with the Ritter Center to address this issue.

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<sup>9</sup> "Homeless Management Information System." Accessed September 21, 2014. <https://www.marinhhs.org/homeless-management-information-system?language=es>.



### **The Helen Vine Detox Center Lease**

The Helen Vine Detox Center, a 26-bed facility run by the Buckelew Programs, is the only public detox facility in Marin County. It is losing its lease February 2016 after 16 years in San Rafael. In 2014, the Center served more than 850 people; the police delivered about 25% of them to their door. Without the Helen Vine Detox Center, many of those people will “dry out” in jail or the hospital. Neither the jail nor the hospital offer the counseling provided at the Center and both are more expensive. As of this writing, the Helen Vine Detox Center has been unable to find a new location. County officials are aiding in the search. Like the Ritter House, local landlords seem unwilling to rent to providers of homeless services and the high cost of real estate in Marin makes it almost impossible for providers to purchase property. County-level leadership with a clear focus must work with Buckelew to address this issue.

### **Rotating Emergency Shelter Team (REST)**

The Marin Organizing Committee (MOC), a faith-based group in Marin County, operates REST, the only emergency shelter program in Marin County. Annually, each night from November 15 through March 15, REST provides dinner and overnight shelter to 40 men and 20 women. The women are housed at The Wellness Center and the men rotate amongst various congregations. In 2011, the Grand Jury issued a report recommending the County “endorse a county-coordinated permanent emergency shelter program as a top priority...” To date, the County has not done so and the MOC continues to operate REST. Recently, REST attempted to find a permanent site for the shelter. They were unable to do so. Currently, REST is proposing to buy or build a 24/7 permanent shelter with wrap around services. To gather information about the summer demand for such a shelter and other questions, REST is embarking on a 2-month Summer Pilot Program at St. Anselm’s School gym. County-level leadership with a clear focus is needed to ensure that REST is an integral part of the systemic plan to eliminate homelessness in Marin County.

### **Chronic Inebriate Pilot Program**

In September 2014, H&HS issued a Request for Proposals for the Chronic Alcohol Use with Justice Involvement Pilot Program (RFP). The RFP was the result of a study conducted by consultant HomeBase which found that 34 chronic inebriates, 32 of whom were homeless, cost Marin County \$2,039,463 in one year.<sup>10</sup> This amount is the cost of the interactions between the police, fire, DA, PD, jail, and hospitals and each chronic inebriate. The report noted that the actual costs are likely much greater. The RFP, for \$300,000, is for a one-year pilot program for ten homeless chronic inebriate males. The program is a transitional supportive housing model where the participants are housed and then provided services to help them to improve their quality of life. Only one response to

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<sup>10</sup> *Chronic Alcohol Use with Justice-System Involvement Report*. Report. San Rafael: Marin County Department of Health & Human Services, 2013. HomeBase - Legal and Technical Assistance.

the RFP was received and no site for the housing could be found. As a result, H&HS will be reissuing the RFP for a three-year program and encouraging scattered sites rather than one site. This is an extremely important program that must be supported by County-level leadership. This represents a movement towards the Housing First model of addressing homelessness in Marin County. Further, a broad assessment of the economic impact of homelessness was used in the report.

#### **The “Front Door”**

How does a homeless person access the available homeless services in Marin County – where does s/he go to find out what support is available? There is no “front door” for the services in Marin. Some noted that “every door is a front door” while others said they were unsure. There is no centralized assessment and referral. At the very least, all first responders should be distributing a list of the available services. Given the decentralized system of service delivery in the County, the lack of a “front door” must be addressed. This failure highlights the lack of County-level leadership focusing all activities on a clear path out of homelessness.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Marin County Reported Allocations To Homeless Support**  
(Supplied to the Grand Jury by H&HS on 3/18/15)

<b>Targeted dollars for homeless</b>	
General Health Services (Ritter Center Health Center and Rotacare)	\$100,000
Specialty Health Services (HIV Clinic, Communicable Disease and Public Health Lab, Dental Clinic, Detention)	unknown, date not keyed to ID for homeless
Public Assistance Program Administration (2/3 incapacitated GA recipients ID as homeless)(from General Fund)	\$412,000
“Employable” payments (this is a designation within the CalWorks program and I am not familiar with their terminology)	\$64,000
Indigent burial	\$25,000
<b>Mental Health Related Services</b>	
Acute Psychiatric Care (Hospital beds)	\$450,000
Sub-acute: Locked facilities and board and care (paid beds)	\$2,000,000
Community Placements: Housing (Buckelew, transitional youth programs, Voyager, Carmel, Odyssey, Prop 63 beds;	\$6,000,000
Assisted Living: Shelter Plus Care, guesthouses,	\$2,500,000
Alcohol/Drug Abuse Treatment Programs	\$1,600,000
Administrative related services (dedicated analyst, Homeless Management Info System, HUD Grant Planning Process)	\$ 250,000
<b>Other Housing &amp; Shelter Services</b>	
Shelters – Mill Street; New Beginnings Center, Transition to Wellness; REST	\$1,425,000
County Rapid Rehousing	\$450,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,176,000</b>