

Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Roadblocks to Safer Evacuation in Marin

Respondent/Agency Name: City of Novato

Your Name: Pat Eklund

Title: Mayor

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: **F1**
- I (we) agree *partially* with the findings numbered: **F2, F3, F4 and F5**
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the findings numbered: **N/A**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I (we) agree with the recommendations numbered: **N/A**
- I (we) agree *partially* with the recommendations numbered: **R1 and R3**
- I (we) disagree *wholly* with the recommendations numbered: **R2**



Date: 3/10/21_

Signed: _____

Mayor, City of Novato

Number of pages attached: 3

RESPONSE OF THE CITY OF NOVATO TO GRAND JURY REPORT

FINDINGS

F1. No single agency or jurisdiction is taking responsibility and authority for building infrastructure for safe evacuation routes across jurisdictions in Marin County.

Response: **Agree**

There appears to be no entity in place that assumes responsibility. Multiple agencies collaborate in developing of evacuation routes and are placing resources towards reducing impediments. The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority provides essential support via funding for projects involving evacuation planning and development of evacuation routes. In the Spring of 2021, a new evacuation notification system will be implemented county-wide. The rollout of the system is being facilitated by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority. "Zonehaven" is expected to significantly increase evacuation capabilities and better predict fire behavior to more quickly prioritize neighborhood evacuations.

F2. There is confusion in the county as to who has ultimate responsibility and authority for ensuring that Marin has safe evacuation routes.

Response: **Partially Agree**

There is no single established agency or authority to ensure safe evacuation routes exist in Marin County. It is left to each jurisdiction to develop, implement, and message respective evacuation plans. This can cause confusion as evacuation routes often cross jurisdictional boundaries and areas of responsibility. The City of Novato and Novato Fire Protection District collaborated in 2020 to develop intuitive and highly user-friendly evacuation route maps. The maps were prepared for approximately 36 separate zones/ neighborhoods, including the unincorporated areas of Novato. Special attention was taken to translate the maps in Spanish and facilitate ease of download by the use of a QR.

F3. Marin County Board of Supervisors and town and city councils have the responsibility for safe evacuation routing, and they have not sufficiently considered evacuation as a criterion when approving improvements to roads and traffic infrastructure in their jurisdictions.

Response: **Partially Agree**

The City of Novato is responsible for developing safe evacuation routes but works closely with the Novato Fire Protection District to accomplish this critical function. Fire suppression and prevention services within the City of Novato and surrounding unincorporated area are provided by the Novato Fire Protection District. The City's Community Development and Public Works Departments evaluate needs and determine necessary improvements to City streets and traffic infrastructure when considering new private development and public works projects. Since mid-2020, City and Novato Fire Protection District staff meet regularly to coordinate ongoing and upcoming projects with fire protection operations and needs. This includes prioritizing alternate evacuation routes, street design and ability to use the roadway for evacuation purposes.