

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 24

SUBJECT: A REGIONAL CAMPUS FOR HEALING: SOBER HOUSING AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT (GREEN OAK RANCH) (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Homelessness, mental health, and addiction are some of the most pressing issues facing our region. Despite great strides taken to address these issues, we are a far cry from meeting the long-term needs of San Diego County's homeless population. According to the 2023 Point in Time Count, homelessness increased by 22%. A study conducted by UC San Francisco found that 82% of our homeless population has mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

At the heart of this crisis lies a critical shortage of resources and housing tailored to individuals with mental health challenges and substance use disorder. These challenges will continue to worsen unless we take immediate steps towards long-term investments in our continuum of care. To prevent people from falling through the gaps, we need long-term housing solutions for those in treatment and recovery. San Diego County needs a campus for healing, where individuals can live in sober housing and continue to receive services as they rebuild their lives.

Green Oak Ranch is a hidden oasis, tucked into urban Vista, currently operating as a faith-based sober living program. For nearly a decade, the Veteran Stand Down has taken place at Green Oak Ranch. The Stand Down takes place once a year, when dozens of services are offered to homeless veterans to help them get connected to what they need. The site has historically been a place of healing, and the Board of Supervisors should continue its legacy, while significantly increasing the capacity.

This is a unique location and opportunity. With the increasing number of homelessness, addiction, and mental illness, coupled with legislative initiatives such as CARE Court, Senate Bill 43, and Proposition 1, the time is now to invest in a campus for healing for long-term sober housing and treatment facilities. Green Oak Ranch has the capacity to accommodate withdrawal management beds, recovery residences, and board and care facilities. In addition, the property has the potential to contribute to the County's conservation and recreation goals. In seizing this opportunity, we will lay the foundation for a long-term housing and treatment solution for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Throughout the County, we have seen an increase in regional facilities, and more are needed. Cities and the County are working to expand emergency housing options regionwide. This campus for healing would be an important regional asset, serving as a haven for individuals to go after they graduate from temporary shelters. We know that hospitals are in desperate need of facilities where they can safely discharge patients. Green Oak Ranch, in the long-term, can meet these needs in a meaningful way.

This campus for healing would be a place of regional rehabilitation. With 24/7 on-site security, job/skills training, opportunities to continue education, and recreational facilities, Green Oak Ranch has the potential to be the first of its kind as a home to those in need of sober living housing as they continue their recovery. At Green Oak Ranch, we will also ensure that long-term, suitable housing is identified for those who are graduating from the program prior to their release from the programs.

With a recent decision by Palomar Hospital to shut down 12 inpatient behavioral health beds, it's critical for the County to build out the continuum of care to free up shorter term resources for those with longer term needs.

Beyond the immediate rehabilitation and housing potential of the campus, the site can support the County's conservation and recreation goals. Approximately 63.3 acres of the site includes open space/habitat areas. The habitat area includes portions of Buena Creek, which serves as an important wildlife corridor, contributes to improved water quality and helps regulate the area's local microclimate. Additionally, the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher was identified onsite. The rest of the site is largely developable, with potential for civic and recreational opportunities such as public trails connecting to the surrounding community.

Today's action would direct the interim Chief Administrative Officer to enter into negotiations for the purchase of Green Oak Ranch.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAIRWOMAN NORA VARGAS AND SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Find that the proposed action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it does not approve a project as defined under Sections 15061(b)(3), 15378(b)(4) and (5) of the CEQA Guidelines.
2. Direct the interim Chief Administrative Officer, or designee, to enter into good faith negotiations with the owners/trustees of Green Oak Ranch for the purchase of the property.
3. Upon successful negotiations, authorize Director, Department of General Services to execute an option to purchase agreement for the purchase of Green Oak Ranch, pay the option deposit, and perform the necessary due diligence and planning on the property.
4. Subject to the execution of the option to purchase agreement, add to the 2025-26 Capital Improvement Needs Assessment (CINA) the purchase of the Green Oak Ranch property and development of a master plan for a long-term buildout of the property based on mental health treatment services and substance use addiction treatment programmatic needs, which may include: withdrawal management beds, recovery residences, and board and care.
5. Direct the interim Chief Administrative Officer to take all steps necessary to ensure that when programs begin, the Green Oak Ranch property will have round-the-clock on-site security and require sober living, and people exiting the programs will be placed in suitable long-term housing.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Prioritizing the expansion of behavioral health treatment and housing is essential to address the pressing challenges faced by individuals struggling with addiction and mental illness in our community. Delaying the implementation of vital services due to lack of housing exacerbates the suffering of vulnerable populations, highlighting the critical need for a property where people can live and continue treatment.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

This proposed action contributes to the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goal of protecting the health and well-being of all San Diegan residents. Enhancing access to housing and mental health and substance use disorder treatment is of paramount priority for the County's most vulnerable residents.

FISCAL IMPACT

If approved, these recommendations would result in one-time costs in the Health and Human Services Agency estimated at \$300,000, for a good faith deposit for the purchase of the Green Oak Ranch property and site due diligence which includes hazardous materials review and CEQA review. This amount can be supported by available appropriations in the Health and Human Services Agency based on FY 2023-24 Operational Plan spending authority. The funding source is existing one-time General Purpose Revenue. Approval of these recommendations will reduce year-end operating results by \$300,000, which would otherwise replenish the General Fund minimum reserve. There will be no additional staff years.

Costs and revenue for the acquisition and initial management of the Green Oak Ranch property as a campus for healing for long-term sober housing and treatment facilities will be based on successful negotiations to purchase the property. Estimated total costs include acquisition of the property (estimated at up to \$12.0 million) and maintenance prior to any property improvements. There will be ongoing costs associated with the maintenance of the property.

Depending on the programs that will be located at Green Oak Ranch, additional ongoing funding will be required. Some of the services identified, including recovery residences and board and care, are not currently eligible for Medi-Cal reimbursement and will therefore result in new costs solely funded by County funds to be identified. There will be fiscal impacts associated with future related recommendations and will be based on the specific programming needs that are established. Staff would return to the Board for consideration and approval.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Desmond, seconded by Supervisor Vargas, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter