

Karen Mattson, SEIU 1021 Executive Board, Statement on Grand Jury Report on Housing

I'd like to start with a quote from a County employee in Fort Bragg: "I can think of a half a dozen employees that the County has offered jobs to here on the coast, but they had to turn down the offer, because they couldn't find anywhere to live."

As one member who responded to the survey put it, "Someone who works for the County should be able to afford to live in the County."

In our inquiries we heard many stories of new employees living for months in motels or campgrounds while they searched unsuccessfully for a home to rent or buy.

Of those surveyed 46% rent and 38% own their home. 12% of respondents reported living outside of Mendocino County because it is too expensive or they were simply unable to find housing. Survey respondents identified home ownership as a top goal but expressed doubt of whether that dream could be realized.

Something that came up again and again was the precarious nature of the housing situation for respondents. Something we found troubling was the high percentage of income that employees reported paying toward housing costs. 23% are paying between 40% and 50% of their income, and 32% report paying 50% or more. That is not sustainable or healthy for our local economy.

A shocking finding in the survey was the high number of respondents, many with stable full-time employment, who find themselves living on the edge and unable to find stable living arrangements. Of the survey respondents, 22% have experienced homelessness with 3% currently homeless while working.

Another theme that came from the surveys was distress and anxiety about being able to establish roots here in the community. They are often in temporary situations living with family or roommates but unable to achieve the independence that they thought permanent employment would provide.

A problem identified on the coast is short term/vacation home rentals. As a tourist destination, there has been a trend of single-family homes being converted to short-term vacation rentals. The City of Fort Bragg and the Town and Mendocino have taken steps to limit or block this, but in the unincorporated parts of the coast these short-term rentals have proliferated. The County did pass a

temporary moratorium in 2017 with the intent to make it permanent, but this has not occurred.

We would like to highlight four recommendations that we believe would have the most impact on housing development here In Mendocino County.

1. We call on the County to dedicate staff time and resources to the Mendocino County Building Trust Fund to help support housing development.
2. We call on the County to dedicate staff time and resources to seek out housing development grants and funds from State and Federal sources.
3. We call on the Board of Supervisors to pass a moratorium on the conversion of single-family houses to new short-term vacation rentals in the unincorporated areas of Mendocino County.
4. We call on the County to dedicate staff time and resources to continuing to streamline and simplify zoning and permitting requirements for housing development and preservation.

Thank you.