



CITY OF STOCKTON

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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August 4, 2014

Presiding Judge
San Joaquin Superior Court
222 East Weber Avenue
Stockton, CA 95202

CITY OF STOCKTON RESPONSE 2014-15 CASE NO. 1414 – SOUTH STOCKTON QUALITY OF LIFE

The City Council and the employees of the City of Stockton are keenly interested in and committed to serving South Stockton. The City also recognizes that there is significant need in South Stockton and meaningful opportunities to improve the quality of life in this community. In fact, in recent years the City has consistently dedicated resources and staffing to address needs in South Stockton. In fact, the City has taken advantage of opportunities to strategically targeted resources and services in South Stockton related to the Marshall Plan, Operation Ceasefire and the South Stockton Promise Zone.

While it is the sincere desire of the City that the quality of life improves in South Stockton, it is not as simple as allocating additional resources or adopting new policies. Otherwise, issues would have already been addressed and resolved. There are a multitude of complex factors that impact the quality of life of a community. The City will continue to consistently dedicate resources and energy in providing services to South Stockton. In addition, the City will continue efforts to better coordinate and facilitate the efforts of community partners in South Stockton through the Promise Zone. This is a critical factor, because the quality of life of South Stockton will not improve without a comprehensive commitment by all government agencies, community based organizations and the community itself. Everyone working together for South Stockton will in fact make possible a change in the quality of life for this community.

In accordance with Sections 933 and 933.05 of the California Penal Code, the City Council of the City of Stockton offers responses to the Grand Jury Report on the above-referenced case as follows:

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 Population, Demographics, and Economics

F 1.1 While there are pockets of poverty throughout Stockton, much of it is concentrated in South Stockton where incomes and educational attainment are low.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. Both in concentrated areas across the community as well as citywide, Stockton experiences lower than average incomes and educational attainment compared to other municipalities in the State and nation.*

- F 1.2 Compared to the rest of the City, South Stockton has few major retail outlets, including major grocery outlets, and only in recent months did a financial institution announce plans to locate a branch in South Stockton.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. While the City of Stockton has encouraged economic development in South Stockton and made efforts to create land-use policies that make development possible, the City is not in a position to control development that is market-driven.*

- F 1.3 People outside and inside South Stockton perceive the area as being an unsafe place to do business, shop, or live.

Response: *The respondent is not in a position to comment on broad statements of public perception. In the absence of data or details qualifying this statement the City is not in a position to comment.*

2.0 Housing and Code Enforcement

- F 2.1 South Stockton has some of the lowest levels of homeownership in the City. This creates a more transient population and one with less “buy-in” to the community.

Response: *The respondent agrees with the finding that South Stockton has one of the lowest homeownership levels in the City. However, the respondent is not in a position to comment on broad statements about the impact of having a lower homeownership rate in South Stockton. In the absence of data or details qualifying this statement the City is not in a position to comment.*

- F 2.2 Code enforcement is inadequately staffed to deal with the problems of South Stockton. Enforcement and abatement efforts are reactive rather than proactive.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. Despite the fact that Measure A funding has been dedicated to significantly increasing Code Enforcement staff, there are code enforcement and abatement backlogs citywide. While code enforcement has been identified as a priority for the City, it will require time and diligence by both the City and its residents to address. Redirecting even more funds to Code Enforcement would require removal of funding from other high priority initiatives of the City including other public safety efforts.*

- F 2.3 In many cases, South Stockton residents do not report blight, graffiti, and building code violations because they do not believe the City will help, and/or they fear reprisals from their landlord.

Response: *The respondent is not in a position to comment on the perceptions of community members. The City takes considerable effort to encourage residents to report all crimes, code enforcement issues, etc. and makes several venues of communication available to the community.*

- F 2.4 The City is not aggressively taking proactive steps to remove slumlords from South Stockton.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this finding. The City has taken aggressive steps to address properties with a history of code enforcement and other calls for services. The City has adjusted code enforcement policies and practices. The City has taken on challenging chronic nuisance abatement cases. The City has even gone as far as taking into receivership certain properties that have been problematic. There is no legal option available which is more aggressive than taking properties into receivership. Given the number and scope of properties with a history of code enforcement issues, it will require a significant amount of time to address these complex cases. The City makes its best effort to balance the concerns, legal rights and opportunities afforded to all parties concerned in such situations. Each case can take several months or more to process through the legally required steps. However, within this context, the City is taking aggressive steps to address the situation. In the absence of additional data or details qualifying this statement related to "slumlords," the City disagrees with this finding.*

- F 2.5 STAND is making contributions to address housing, drug activity, crime, and quality-of-life issues in South Stockton.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. STAND has proven to be a valuable asset to the community.*

- R 2.1 By December 31, 2015, the City resources be allocated on an equitable distribution based on the needs of each City Council district, and the City in its present and future budgets provide the necessary resources to increase the CEO and SPD staff necessary to adequately address the longstanding neglect affecting South Stockton.

Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. In recent years, City resources have been allocated equitably based on need and strategic opportunities identified citywide. Municipal budgeting is complex and takes into account multiple need factors. From the City's perspective,*

there has been an equitable distribution of resources citywide in recent years. It is worth noting that in overcoming historical inequity in allocation of resources cannot be overcome in a short time span. It is also worth noting that municipal budgeting is a democratic process amongst multiple Council Members that represent the distinct geographies of the City. In addition, as noted above, significant resources have been allocated to Code Enforcement and the Police Department. This increase in resources has been balanced with other priority initiatives and at this time the City is not in a position to further allocated additional resources to Code Enforcement and the Police Department.

3.0 Crime

F 3.1 The activity of street gangs stems from and exacerbates poverty problems for South Stockton residents.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this finding. Gang activity is very complex and multi-faceted. Poverty is one impacting factor, but it is not the primary factor. Extensive evidence-based research points to a number of other factors as more closely related to gang activity including educational attainment and social/cultural influences.*

F 3.2 Crimes of violence, in recent years soared citywide as policing levels plummeted.

Response: *The respondent partially agrees and partially disagrees with this finding. Prior to 2013, there were dramatic and unacceptable spikes in violent crime. In preceding years, policing levels also lowered. However, in 2013 and 2014, violent crimes reduced measurably while police staffing has been slowly increasing.*

F 3.3 In recent months the City has begun to address the problems of crime, but it will take months, possibly years, of effort to rebuild the police force decimated by the City's bankruptcy.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this finding. Significant, sustained reductions in crime require long-term strategies and comprehensive efforts of the entire community.*

R 3.1 By December 31, 2015, the City Council shall begin quarterly public reporting of its results from the Operation Ceasefire and Marshall Plan programs, with emphasis on criminal activities that originate or concentrate in South Stockton.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this recommendation. In large part, this recommendation has been implemented. The City*

provides regular updates to the Measure A Citizen's Oversight Committee and Marshall Plan Stakeholders Committee related to results from Operation Ceasefire and Marshall Plan programs. The City will continue to report on these results on a citywide basis which includes important results accomplished in South Stockton.

- R 3.2 By December 31, 2015, the City, working with community organizations, make sure South Stockton quality-of-life programs are given consideration for funding and manpower.

Response: *There is insufficient information to respond to this recommendation. The City is currently working with community organizations through the Marshall Plan, the Office of Violence Prevention, and South Stockton Promise Zone planning efforts. The responses provided above speak to code enforcement concerns. It is unclear what other quality-of-life programs are being recommended for funding and manpower. Also as outlined above, the City has committed significant Measure A resources to code enforcement and public safety.*

- R 3.3 By September 30, 2015, while continuing with its newly established Blitz program, the City concentrate efforts on established – and transparent – criteria, and give consideration to the needs of South Stockton.

Response: *This recommendation has been implemented. The City has revised the original criteria used to select Blitz locations and selected a location for the next Blitz area within South Stockton that will be announced in the near future. It is worth noting that the City has been transparent and forthcoming with the criteria used in selecting Blitz areas and will share the adjusted criteria.*

4.0 City Funding

- F 4.1 South Stockton has been neglected and underserved by City government for many years.

Response: *There is insufficient information to respond to this recommendation. While the respondent agrees that there are significant needs to be addressed in South Stockton, it is unclear the criteria or standard by which this broad statement is measured. In recent years, City government and City officials have made important efforts to serve and respond to the needs of South Stockton.*

- F 4.2 City officials, with some notable exceptions, continue to speak about the problems of South Stockton, but take little action.

Response: *The respondent disagrees with this finding. In recent years, City officials and City staff have spent countless hours meeting with citizens and working side-by-side with them in South Stockton to ensure that real action takes place. Again, it is unclear what the criteria or standards are by which this broad statement is being measured.*

R 4.1 By September 30, 2015, the City should begin holding a series of public workshop/forums devoted to the needs of South Stockton – as guided by its residents – with the purpose of developing short- and long-term goals to correct the long neglected issues affecting South Stockton.

Response: *The respondent agrees with this recommendation. While multiple public workshops, forums and surveys have been conducted recently in South Stockton, this community engagement activity will continue. This recommendation will be carried out through the South Stockton Promise Zone implementation efforts for which the City Council allocated \$100,000 in the current budget. A recommendation for using this \$100,000, which includes community engagement, strategic planning and implementation, is currently being developed for Council consideration.*

KURT O. WILSON
CITY MANAGER

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