

## **A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING RECOVERY COMMUNITY: PUEBLO DEL MAR IN MONTEREY COUNTY**

**Neola Brown\***

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **PUEBLO DEL MAR, MONTEREY COUNTY**

Pueblo Del Mar is a transitional housing recovery community (not a recovery program) located on the former Fort Ord Army Base in the City of Marina. Pueblo Del Mar has a total of 56 units located on its site, utilized for housing homeless individuals and their families who have successfully completed an alcohol or drug rehabilitation program. There are currently approximately 40 adults and 70 children housed at Pueblo Del Mar. The housing at Pueblo Del Mar has been beautifully refurbished. Each two-bedroom unit is fully furnished and provides a safe haven for families to raise their children while focusing on sobriety, education, and employment. Residents may stay a maximum of 18 months. The program consists of transitional housing, case management and supportive services for homeless families ranging from the 12-step program to parenting skills classes, all of which are provided on site.

#### **PUEBLO DEL MAR MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS**

- Monterey County Health Department/Behavioral Health Division-Sun Street Center
- Monterey County Housing Authority
- Monterey County Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Children's Services International

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY**

Alameda County faces many of the same challenges as Monterey County. In 1998, the San Francisco Bay Area added 70,000 new jobs but built only 28,700 units of housing, only 41% of the needed production. Market rate housing developers primarily served moderate and higher-income households. Out of a projected need for 36,672 housing units for those who earn 50% or less of a city's median income, only 26% of the units were actually built. The end result—more people are forced to be homeless due to the lack of affordable homes. Therefore, the demand for housing has far exceeded the supply.

Similar to Monterey County, Alameda County is grappling with the need to identify and provide Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) services to clients to ensure their ability to become and remain self-sufficient, although the total magnitude of the problem has yet to be determined. To this end, Alameda County has established contracts with AOD service providers to provide many of the AOD services. Additionally, the Alameda County Homeless Base Conversion Collaborative (now called the Alameda Point Collaborative) was formed in 1994 as an association of homeless providers who came together to access opportunities created by the closure of East Bay military bases, including the Oakland Army Base & Naval Supply, Alameda Naval Air Station and Oak Knoll Military Hospital. The Alameda Point Collaborative has acquired the land and

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buildings for 241 housing units located on the closed bases to be used for supportive services, employment training and economic development. There are currently six homeless housing developers and service providers who will provide transitional housing along with case management services to homeless individuals on the bases. The target population for the clients to be served include survivors of domestic violence and veterans. Although the case management services will include drug and alcohol services, the target population will not be individuals leaving drug rehabilitation programs.

Through the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Department, there are approximately 100-130 Clean & Sober Transitional Housing Programs throughout Alameda County. However, unlike Pueblo Del Mar, they are geographically dispersed and do not provide the “community” setting that is afforded the clients at Pueblo Del Mar. As a result, the services are more fragmented and difficult to obtain.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Work through the Alameda Point Collaborative to establish a replica of Pueblo Del Mar.
- Enlighten the Alameda Point Collaborative of the merits of Pueblo Del Mar and the need to have a project in Alameda County that specifically addresses individuals who have committed to sobriety and are in need of a recovering “community” and support services to enhance their stability and self-sufficiency. Service providers of the Alameda Point Collaborative plan to provide many of the services provided to residents of Pueblo Del Mar, such as life-skills education, child care, employment training and placement and, transportation. Resulting in

many of the services being available along with the housing.

- SSA, through the Department of Workforce and Resource Development (WRD), currently works collaboratively with the Alameda County Behavioral Health Department to provide alcohol and other drug services and contracts with many of the same agencies. Therefore, WRD and the Behavioral Health Department could provide the expertise to the Alameda Point Collaborative in bringing a similar project as Pueblo Del Mar into fruition. Staff at the Behavioral Health Department noted that there is a shortage of housing available to clients leaving drug rehabilitation programs and therefore, support having a program such as Pueblo Del Mar that not only provides housing, but a more seamless delivery system of services.

### **CONCLUSION**

Pueblo Del Mar is a program that addresses housing, income, education, family reunification, parenting skills, life skills, child care, transportation, mental/physical health and AOD issues. It utilizes a truly holistic approach that is essential in providing services and extremeley needed in Alameda County!

## **A TRANSITIONAL HOUSING RECOVERY COMMUNITY: PUEBLO DEL MAR IN MONTEREY COUNTY**

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### **DESCRIPTION OF PUEBLO DEL MAR**

Pueblo Del Mar is a transitional housing recovery community (not a recovery program) located on 2.5 acres of the former Fort Ord Army Base in the City of Marina. Pueblo Del Mar has a total of 56 units located on its site. Of the 56 units, 52 units are utilized for housing homeless families who have successfully completed an alcohol or drug rehabilitation program. The remaining four units are utilized as follows: one unit reserved for a police officer (who lives on site); one unit reserved for a Resident Case Manager (who organizes tenant activities, etc.); one unit reserved for the Counseling Center; and one unit reserved for a caretaker unit (property manager). In addition, there are three counselors and a program manager who assist approximately 40 adults and 70 children.

The housing at Pueblo Del Mar has been beautifully refurbished. Each two-bedroom unit is fully furnished and includes a washer and dryer, two-car garage, one bathroom, meticulously maintained lawns (both in the front and back) and a safe, nurturing environment for the children. Additionally, there is a playground area, basketball courts and a childcare facility in close proximity. Rent and utilities are paid through vendor payments to the Housing Authority by the Monterey County Department of Social Services for participants who receive CalWORKs. Additionally, residents at Pueblo Del Mar are placed on the Section 8 waiting list to assist them with permanent housing once their time limit of 18 months has been reached.

Pueblo Del Mar provides a safe haven for families

to raise their children while focusing on sobriety, education, and employment. Residents receive services ranging from the 12-step program to parenting skills classes, all of which are provided on site.

### **STEPS TO BECOME A PUEBLO DEL MAR RESIDENT**

- **Step 1:** Families referred must have successfully completed an alcohol and drug (AOD) rehabilitation program, have committed to work toward sobriety and self-sufficiency and meet the HUD definition of homelessness.
- **Step 2:** Once referred (either through the Monterey County Department of Social Services (DSS), Child Protective Services—DSS Family and Children's Services, or one of the various drug rehabilitation programs within Monterey County such as Door to Hope or Sunstreet Centers), the client must meet the eligibility criteria, as stated below.
- **Step 3:** The Employment Assistance Program (EAP) staff of Behavioral Health coordinates the initial eligibility screening.
- **Step 4:** Once the preliminary eligibility has been verified, the applicant completes the necessary paperwork to allow the Monterey County Housing Authority to conduct the criminal background check. The applicant also receives information regarding the vendor payment procedure for payment of rents and utility fees to the Housing Authority. All CalWORKs recipients must sign and authorize the vendor payments. The Housing Authority verifies income and determines the family's financial eligibility and homelessness status.

- Step 5: The family is then referred to the Review Committee for acceptance into the program. The Review Committee meets with the families and determines, through consensus, the family's suitability for the program at Pueblo Del Mar. The Review Committee includes:
  - 1) The Pueblo Del Mar Resident Manager,
  - 2) one representative from the Housing Authority, and
  - 3) one representative from each of the three recovery programs.
- Step 6: Once accepted, the family is: 1) assigned a unit by the Housing Authority, 2) completes a lease agreement and 3) moves in.

The ultimate goal is to allow participants to "develop skills to remain drug/alcohol free and become better parents with a home and vision for a better future."

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PUEBLO DEL MAR**

- Recovery period (90 days minimum)
- Legal resident of the United States
- One year Monterey County residency
- Criminal background clearance
- Eligible for CalWORKs OR low-income working (must pay 1/3 of the cost of rent)
- Must meet HUD criteria of homelessness
- Families with children
- Capable and willing to share apartment
- Demonstrated motivation to sobriety (must be willing to participate in community activities, enter job training or seek work and commit to self-sufficiency)

### **HISTORY/BACKGROUND**

"Homelessness in Monterey County came to the forefront of the social conscience in 1988, when local media wrote of the death of a homeless person in the vicinity of a hospital. This tragic incident galvanized leadership to review the public and private services available to prevent similar incidents and improve programs that focus on the homeless."<sup>1</sup> The story of the death of a homeless man, said to have frozen to death near the Monterey County hospital, who also may have been intoxicated, received vast media attention. Because the Monterey County Board of Supervisors were extremely sympathetic to the needs of the homeless and extremely appalled by this event, they commissioned a study by a consulting firm and formulated a 36-member task force to conduct a needs assessment to determine what could be done to get the homeless off the streets. Two hundred homeless individuals were sampled by the consulting firm, which also determined that there were approximately 3,000 individuals homeless on a given night in Monterey County. The data was reviewed by the task force and, after obtaining public input, the findings were used to develop the county's first five-year Homeless Services Plan, which was approved by the Board in November, 1990.

In early 1991, after the results of the report were published, the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers was created to address the issue of homelessness. The Coalition was comprised of eleven member agencies and other associate members including DSS and staff from the Monterey County Department of Health, with the Monterey County

<sup>1</sup>Applied Survey Research, March 1999

Housing Authority serving initially as the fiscal sponsor. Additionally, DSS assigned staff to serve as a Homeless Coordinator to work on the imminent base closures, resulting in much community dialogue surrounding the 6,500 units available on the 28,000 acres at Fort Ord that could be acquired for free through the McKinney Act. The Coalition initially took a regional approach by including Santa Clara County. The Coalition, after meeting every two weeks for several years and making many calls to Washington D.C., the Department of Health & Human Services and local government officials, acquired several million dollars worth of property at the former Fort Ord (150 units) to fund a variety of services and programs to serve the homeless.

### **PUEBLO DEL MAR MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS**

- Monterey County Health Department/Behavioral Health Division-Sun Street Center
- Monterey County Housing Authority
- Monterey County Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Children's Services International

### **IMPETUS FOR PUEBLO DEL MAR (BY AGENCY)**

#### **Housing Authority (HA)**

After four years of negotiations and the arduous task of completing a complicated application process, the Housing Authority acquired 2.5 acres of land at Fort Ord through the McKinney Act. The initial purpose of the land was to provide low-cost housing to migrant farm workers. However, the HA learned that the culture of the migrant workers would prevent them from wanting to move away from their communities and live far away from their

work site. Also during this time, HUD laws changed which prevented the HA from serving undocumented immigrants. After completing the arduous process of acquiring the land and then discovering that their plan to house migrant workers wasn't going to work, the HA contemplated returning the land to the federal government. However, because of pressure from the federal government regarding base reuse, the HA soon discovered that returning the land was not an option.

#### **Behavior Health (BH) Division**

Each project needs a vision and the Executive Director of BH was the visionary who saw the need to provide women with children leaving a recovery program with a sober, safe, living environment, which is essential to their ability to sustain the recovery process. (Monterey County had only had eight beds throughout the County!) Relocating from a living situation in which individuals must deal with significant others, friends, or neighbors who continue to use drugs or alcohol to an environment which values and supports recovery was determined as essential. As a result of the monthly meetings of the Coalition, staff from Behavior Health learned that the Housing Authority had acquired land at Fort Ord and did not have a use for it. The Director of Behavioral Health approached the Director of the Housing Authority with a proposal to utilize the housing units for individuals who were homeless and who had an addictive disorder. The proposal resolved the Housing Authority's dilemma.

#### **Monterey County Department of Social Services (DSS)**

DSS was faced with the challenge of implementing welfare reform and in July 1977, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors adopted a strategy for

welfare reform that included a commitment to “...create a network of coordinated, collaborative, high quality community and governmental services to support families moving toward self-sufficiency”. The Agency’s 1999 Community Action Plan cited alcohol and drug abuse as critical barriers to building self-sufficiency in low-income neighborhoods. It was noted that a significant number of welfare recipients utilized alcohol and other drugs in ways that impair their ability to secure or retain jobs, as well as their ability to become and remain effective parents. The estimates of substance abuse within the welfare recipient population was as high as 39%. It was also noted that for many high-risk welfare beneficiaries, the availability of clean and sober housing is an important part of their recovery program. DSS made a decision to contract out recovery services for women. Once Pueblo Del Mar was created, DSS attached those services to the same contract. Sun Street Centers was awarded the contract, along with the Pueblo Del Mar project.

### **Director, Children’s Services International (CSI)**

Prior to the military leaving Fort Ord, the military built a state-of-the-art childcare facility which had only been used approximately 1 1/2 years prior to their departure. CSI applied for the deed to serve homeless children and families after the military moved. (The equipment, land and building were deeded.) Because CSI is the largest childcare program in Monterey County (operates nine centers) and has experience working with homeless families (one center dedicated to homeless families), CSI was an important aspect to the formulation of Pueblo Del Mar.

## **SIGNIFICANT STEPS (INCLUDING CHALLENGES) FOR IMPLEMENTING PUEBLO DEL MAR**

### **Communication/Cross-agency Training**

One of the biggest challenges for the Pueblo Del Mar project was communication. Getting four to five different agencies to successfully communicate on any project (especially one this significant) was a huge feat! Early on, the agencies recognized their inability to communicate effectively and decided that the first challenge to overcome would have to be communication. Because of the magnitude of the problem, the collaborative decided to obtain facilitated training through the Bay Area Academy utilizing the Team-Based Interdisciplinary Proactive approach. The three-month training helped the attendees to: 1) understand the role of each of the partners, 2) establish mutual trust, 3) develop a common language, values, and priorities, 4) develop a continuum of services for the clients, 5) handle power struggles, communication barriers, and turf issues, and 6) an arena to discuss and understand each member’s specialized knowledge in order to learn from their expertise. All participants noted that this training was invaluable and imperative to the success of implementing Pueblo Del Mar.

### **Developing Policies and Procedures**

The collaborative, once they worked through the communication issues, were able to work together to develop a “Policy, Procedures and Referral Handbook” that mutually describes policies and procedures for the Project. The policies describe the client flow, the exchange of information, the responsibilities of staff at the various agencies, intake, assessment, referral, and the types of services to be provided to participants (substance

abuse, domestic violence etc.). This document is reviewed frequently by all stakeholders and appropriate changes are made.

### **Getting Buy-in from other Agencies (Local Government, Police, Community)**

In addition to concerns about communication, another significant challenge, was getting agencies outside the collaborative to support the project. Some of the concerns from the communities and local governmental agencies were:

- large numbers of homeless people converging on their city with a reputation as the “homeless capital of the world”.
- Declining property values
- Increase in crime (due to the influx of the “drug” population)
- Declining economic base
- Beliefs that the property should be used for other projects that would increase city revenue

### **Development of a Workgroup**

Staff from HA, DSS, BH, and CIS formed a workgroup that met weekly for a six-month period for two hours per meeting to develop the policies and procedures relating to Pueblo Del Mar. Also, DSS assigned benefit staff who were dedicated totally to the project. The workgroup continues to meet on a quarterly basis to review the policies and procedures and make amendments as needed. Although this is a significant time commitment, the frequent meetings helped members to establish a working relationship in order to resolve the numerous nuances in developing a virtually seamless delivery system and to provide the best services for the participants. The workgroup currently meets on a monthly basis with the Pueblo Del Mar staff to discuss participants.

### **Myth/Data Gathering**

Originally, the collaborative intended Pueblo Del Mar to be solely for CalWORKs parents, specifically single mothers with an infant or toddler. This did not materialize. As a result, they had to expand the criteria to include low-income families and families in the reunification process who were in recovery and not on CalWORKs. They also discovered that the average family size of the applicants included families with two or more children with an average age of seven years.

#### **This situation created a number of challenges:**

##### **1. Afterschool Programs**

Pueblo Del Mar did not anticipate the need for many afterschool programs on site. However, the reality is that they do need to have supervised activities for children who can not enroll in the afterschool programs located at their school sites. Unfortunately, there are restrictions on building use at Pueblo Del Mar that don't allow for a facility to be used for afterschool care for older children.

##### **2. Transportation**

Transportation for before and afterschool care for the older children became a significant barrier. Monterey County school buses do not come to CSI. Therefore, CSI had to acquire and hire its own buses and drivers, which is very expensive. There was also a shortage of qualified, licensed staff to drive the buses.

##### **3. Reduction in Revenue**

The HA expected to generate twice as much revenue having two families in each unit. However, families with five or more children could not share a unit with other families, thereby reducing the amount of rent earned for each unit.

## CHALLENGES FACING MONTEREY COUNTY

- Major industries based on seasonal and part-time employment
- High housing costs (second least affordable housing in the Country<sup>2</sup>)
- High unemployment
- Remote rural areas without adequate services
- Jobs often not earning “living wage”
- Insufficient child care for poor and “working poor”
- Limited literacy and job training

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY

Alameda County faces many of the same challenges as Monterey County. In 1998, the San Francisco Bay Area added 70,000 new jobs but built only 28,700 housing, only 41% of the needed production. Market rate housing developers primarily served moderate and higher-income households. Out of a projected need for 36,672 housing units for those who earn 50% or less of a city’s median income, only 26% of the units were actually built. The end result—more people are forced to be homeless due to the lack of affordable homes. Therefore, the demand for housing has far exceeded the supply.

Similar to Monterey County, Alameda County is grappling with the need to identify and provide AOD services to clients to ensure their ability to become and remain self-sufficient, although the total magnitude of the problem has yet to be determined. To this end, Alameda County has established contracts with AOD service providers to provide many of the AOD services.

Similar to Monterey County’s Coalition of Homeless Service Providers, Alameda County has a collaborative of homeless service providers, the Continuum of Care Council, that meets to develop strategies and coordinate homeless services utilizing a regional approach. Additionally, the Alameda County Homeless Base Conversion Collaborative (now called the Alameda Point Collaborative) was formed in 1994 as an association of homeless providers who came together to access opportunities created by the closure of East Bay military bases, including the Oakland Army Base & Naval Supply, Alameda Naval Air Station and Oak Knoll Military Hospital. The Alameda Point Collaborative has acquired the land and buildings for 241 housing units located on the closed bases to be used for supportive services, employment training, and economic development, including a 70,000 square foot community center and a 90-slot child care center. There are currently six homeless housing developers and service providers who will provide transitional housing along with case management services to homeless individuals on the bases. The target population for the clients to be served include survivors of domestic violence and veterans. Although the case management services will include drug and alcohol services, the target population will not be individuals leaving drug rehabilitation programs.

Through the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Department there are approximately 100-130 Clean & Sober Transitional Housing Programs throughout Alameda County. However, unlike Pueblo Del Mar, they are geographically dispersed and do not provide the “community” setting that is afforded the clients at Pueblo Del Mar. As a result, the services are more fragmented and difficult to obtain.

<sup>2</sup>1994 Survey by the National Association of Home Builders

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work through the Alameda Point Collaborative to establish a replica of Pueblo Del Mar
- Enlighten the Alameda Point Collaborative of the merits of Pueblo Del Mar and the need to have a project in Alameda County that specifically addresses individuals who have committed to sobriety and are in need of a recovering “community” and support services to enhance their stability and self-sufficiency. Service providers of the Alameda Point Collaborative plan to provide many of the services provided to residents of Pueblo Del Mar, such as, life-skills education, child care, employment training and placement, transportation. As a result, many of the services would already be available, in addition to housing.
- SSA, through the Department of Workforce and Resource Development (WRD), currently works collaboratively with the Alameda County Behavioral Health Department to provide alcohol and other drug services and contracts with many of the same agencies. Therefore, WRD and the Behavioral Health Department could provide the expertise to the Alameda Point Collaborative in bringing a similar project as Pueblo Del Mar into fruition. Staff at the Behavioral Health Department noted that there is a shortage of housing available to clients leaving drug rehabilitation programs and therefore support having a program such as Pueblo Del Mar that not only provides housing, but a more seamless delivery system of services.

## CONCLUSION

One of the residents at Pueblo Del Mar brought tears to my eyes when she passionately described how she: 1) was the third generation in a family of

drug abuse, 2) how she didn't finish high school, 3) used drugs, 4) and ultimately lost her children. Since being a resident a Pueblo Del Mar, she has been able to attend school, remain sober, and reunify with all of her eight children! What other program addresses housing, income, education, family reunification, parenting skills, life skills, child care, transportation, mental/physical health and AOD issues? Pueblo Del Mar is truly a holistic approach, which is essential in providing services and extremeley needed in Alameda County!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to my liaison, Sylvia Flores-Grattan, who graciously scheduled all of my appointments and provided directions to all the agencies. Additionally, special thanks to the staff of Monterey County's Department of Social Service, Housing Authority, Children's Services Inc., Sun Street Centers, Door to Hope, and Behavioral Health Care who provided me with a wealth of information in the preparation of this document. Also, a special thanks to Mario Solis, Alameda County Assistant Agency Director, who recommended me for the BASSC program.