



July 21, 2026

Honorable Scott R.L. Young
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of Napa County
825 Brown Street
Napa, CA 94559

**SUBJECT: City of Napa Response to the 2025-2026 Grand Jury Final Report
“Strengthening Napa’s Planning Division: Technology, Coordination,
and Workforce Stability.”**

The City of Napa has received and carefully reviewed the 2025-2026 Grand Jury Final Report “Strengthening Napa’s Planning Division: Technology, Coordination, and Workforce Stability?” (hereinafter “Grand Jury Report”). The City understands the Grand Jury has invited the Community Resources and Development Director and City Manager to also respond. In accordance with the California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, this letter documents the City’s invited responses to all findings and recommendations to this Grand Jury report (herein after “City Response”). The City Response was prepared by City staff, including the Community Resources and Development Director and City Manager, and presented to the City Council for their consideration. At the public meeting on July 21, 2026, the City Council approved this City Response and directed the City Manager to submit this City Response on behalf of the City Council.

General Responses:

F1. The Planning Division’s cost-recovery model is constrained by inconsistent project billing practices. The department relies on a manually updated spreadsheet to track active projects and historical information, increasing the risk of error and limiting transparency. Significant staff time is required for time-tracking and chargebacks, reducing operational efficiency.

The City of Napa disagrees in part with this finding. The Planning Division does track active projects by a manually updated spreadsheet, but the nexus between this spreadsheet and billing practices isn’t clear to City staff. Regardless, City staff does agree that there may be more efficient ways to track active projects and historical information, which may increase billing consistency and efficiency.

F2. The Planning Division recovers only about 60% of its operational costs resulting in significant staff time going unreimbursed. This shortfall requires the General Fund to subsidize application review.

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The City of Napa disagrees in part with this finding. The City agrees that the recovery of operational costs varies from year to year and that there is staff time going unreimbursed, thus requiring the General Fund to subsidize part of staff's work time. A complete analysis is needed of the Department's billing practices, and it may not be feasible to assign 100% of staff time to billable projects. There are reasonable activities performed by staff like answering counter questions or working on the comprehensive zoning ordinance, that cannot be billed as an application review.

F3. Coordination between the Planning Division and other City divisions to support an efficient entitlement review process needs to be strengthened. The lack of structured coordination mechanisms reduces accountability and predictability.

The City of Napa disagrees with this finding. The City does agree that the current entitlement review process could be improved and strengthened but doesn't agree that there is a lack of structured coordinated mechanisms.

F4. The absence of an interdepartmental project tracking system prevents a unified view of active applications. Interdepartmental review timelines are not formally established, resulting in inconsistent turnaround times.

The City of Napa disagrees with this finding. There are project tracking methods and Interdepartmental review timelines, however, these systems are relatively manual and the City agrees there is room for improvement.

F5. The City experiences high turnover within the Planning Division and lacks a formal succession planning framework. The lack of succession planning results in gaps in institutional knowledge, and limited cross training hinders continuity during staff transitions.

The City of Napa agrees with this finding and has experienced turnover of the Department Director and Planning Manager, as well as the retirement of the Senior Planners within the past 24 months.

F6. In general, developers may extend entitlements up to three additional times without demonstrating progress totaling 6 years. Repeated extensions allow properties to remain vacant or undeveloped for extended periods.

The City of Napa disagrees in part with this finding, only in that not all projects can extend entitlements up to three additional times for a total of six years. The City does agree that demonstrating progress has not always been a consistently applied measure for consideration of an extension.

F7. Entitlement practices may inadvertently incentivize long-term vacancy.

The City of Napa agrees with this finding.

Recommendations:

R1. By December 31, 2026 the Planning Division should enhance its records management, time-tracking and billing capabilities in collaboration with the City's IT Division.

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The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future by December 31, 2027 (a year later than the Grand Jury's recommendation). The City of Napa is working to implement our new Enterprise Permitting and Licensing (EPL) System by December 31, 2026. This project, and the implementation of the Zoning Ordinance will require a significant amount of time between now and early 2027. Further, the implementation of the new system is necessary to assess what gaps in records management, time-tracking, and billing capabilities may still exist that require further revision and upgrades.

R2. By September 30, 2026 the CRD Director should designate a Project Lead to manage software system implementation, testing and release across CRD divisions. This will improve timeliness, on-budget delivery and ensure all user-defined requirements are built appropriately and working efficiently.

The recommendation has been implemented. A Systems Support Analyst in the Information Technology Division of the City Manager's office has been identified as the project lead for system implementation, testing and release. This individual is working directly with staff in the CRD Department as well as the other Departments to ensure user-defined requirements are built to the extent they can be and the system is working efficiently.

R3. appears to be omitted from the numbering sequence of the report which goes from R2 to R4.

R4. Implement a department-wide project tracking system where status of projects are updated at least bi-weekly or monthly.

The recommendation requires further analysis. As City staff work to implement the new EPL system, project tracking should be improved. Once the system is fully implemented, staff will evaluate whether additional tracking systems are needed or if the system can be improved to achieve the goal of an efficient department-wide project tracking system. The analysis will be completed by December 31, 2027.

R5. Establish formal interdepartmental review timelines for entitlement applications.

The recommendation will be implemented by December 31, 2026, and formal review timelines will be built into the new EPL system.

R6. Engage with their partner departments to ensure shared ownership of a streamlined entitlement process.

The recommendation requires further analysis. As City staff work to implement the new EPL system, shared ownership of the entitlement process will change. Once the system is fully implemented, staff will evaluate additional mechanisms to streamline the entitlement process and share ownership responsibilities. This analysis will be complete by December 31, 2027.

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R7. Leverage technology to improve turnaround times and strengthen cross-departmental cooperation.

The recommendation will be implemented by December 31, 2026, as formal review timelines will be built into the new EPL system.

R8. Develop and implement a formal succession planning program.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. The City of Napa is working on a citywide program to implement formal growth and development programs that focus on succession planning opportunities. The Division will implement this program that is being led by the Human Resources Department. Since the Grand Jury report was published, the City has hired a new Planning Manager and has a new Associate Planner scheduled to join the team on July 20th. The Planning Division is working on a recruitment plan to hire another Planner and expects to be fully staffed by December 31, 2026.

R9. Identify key positions and establish pathways for internal staff development.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. The City of Napa is working on a citywide program to implement formal growth and development programs that focus on succession planning opportunities. The Division will implement this program that is being led by the Human Resources Department.

R10. Create and maintain comprehensive documentation of core processes.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. The policies and procedures of the Planning Division should be documented to ensure consistency in practice.

R11. Implement cross-training across critical functions.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. Staff has already identified areas where cross training would be beneficial and as new staff is onboarded, cross training opportunities will be identified.

R12. By December 31, 2026 the Planning Division should evaluate entitlement extension policies to promote timely project initiation.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. Staff will schedule a time for City Council to discuss and provide direction to staff during a regular scheduled City Council meeting. This will assist staff with drafting entitlement extension policies.

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R13. By December 31, 2026 the CRD Director should establish periodic reviews of keystone properties to ensure regular review of undeveloped properties to encourage movement.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. Staff will schedule a time for City Council to discuss and provide direction to staff during a regular scheduled City Council meeting.

R14. By December 31, 2026 City of Napa should evaluate options to accelerate keystone property development.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented by December 31, 2026. Staff will schedule a time for City Council to discuss and provide direction to staff during a regular scheduled City Council meeting.

The City of Napa thanks the Grand Jury for its service during the 2025-2026 term. If you or the Grand Jury Foreperson have any questions regarding the City's response, please contact me.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steve Potter
City Manager
City of Napa

Cc:
Foreperson, 2026-2027 Napa County Grand Jury
Christopher Diaz, Interim City Attorney
Molly Rattigan, Community Resources and Development Director