

DATE: May 23, 2022

TO: Rental Housing Committee

FROM: Patricia Black, Senior Management Analyst
Anky van Deursen, Rent Stabilization Program Manager

SUBJECT: **Eviction Prevention Program Update**

PURPOSE

To receive an informational update on the Eviction Prevention Program.

BACKGROUND

On April 19, 2021, the Rental Housing Committee (RHC) formalized an Eviction Prevention Program and authorized \$45,000 of funding for legal services. The RHC requested staff implement a program that incorporated the following services in order to prevent evictions, mitigate potential displacement due to COVID-19 financial impacts, and promote community stability:

- Multi-pronged outreach to tenants, landlords, and community organizations.
- Early intervention informational contact from City to tenant and landlord after Termination Notice filed with City.
- Case management services through Project Sentinel and other community-based organizations, landlord and tenant counseling, education and dispute resolution services.
- Full-scope legal representation for tenants as needed.

At the RHC's October meeting, the Committee received a program update from staff and reallocated \$15,000 from the \$45,000 budgeted for legal services for the Eviction Prevention Program to translations and one-on-one support services for the Eviction Prevention Program. The City Council also allocated \$50,000 in funding for Fiscal Year 2021-22 to support the efforts of the Eviction Prevention Program and the Eviction Help Center.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of Mountain View's Eviction Prevention Program connected landlords and tenants in Mountain View with support services in effort to reduce evictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Community members could access information, receive one-to-one support, and connect with services provided by our community partners like Community Services Agency of Mountain View and Los Altos and Project Sentinel by attending Eviction Help Center Clinics and pop-up events.

ANALYSIS

The Eviction Prevention Program and the Eviction Help Center proved to be robust, time-intensive, and important to the Mountain View community. Implementation required multiple staff members from different City departments, including the Multicultural Engagement Program (MEP), multiple community partner organizations, and an extensive volunteer network. The majority of clients were nonnative-English speakers and required, on average, one and a half to two hours of one-to-one support in a language other than English. The Multicultural Engagement Program, part of the City Manager's Office, provided the bulk of translations support which proved critical to the success of the program.

Program Highlights (from May 13, 2021 through April 30, 2022)

- 384 households received one-to-one rent relief application assistance:
 - 45% of the total Mountain View household applications for State rent relief.
- 155 clients requested and received legal assistance.
- 816 courtesy letters and informational packets mailed to tenants and landlords (August 2021 through April 2022):
 - 57 households who received courtesy letters attended the Eviction Help Center representing 215 termination notices for failure to pay rent filed with the City.
- 50 volunteers trained.
- 7 community organizations participated.

Clients Served

- 86% of all Eviction Help Center Clinic clients required non-English language services:
 - 82% required assistance in Spanish.
- 100% of clients reporting income qualify as low-income:
 - 87% qualify as extremely low-income (30% or below the Area Median Income).
 - On average, of those reporting income and households size, three people reside per household and live on an income of \$26,473.
- Clients required rent relief and utility assistance:
 - 66% needed help with past-due rent.
 - 76% needed help with future rent.
 - 43% needed help with utilities.
 - 15% needed help with other expenses.

Outreach

The formal launch of the program began in May with Rent Stabilization Program staff hosting rent relief pop-up events and interactive webinars. In total, Rent Stabilization Program staff hosted five joint events in coordination with the Community Services Agency of Mountain View and Los Altos, Project Sentinel, the Community in Action Team (CAT), and community ambassadors from the Spanish Leadership Academy to help people apply for COVID-19 emergency rent relief programs (including the City, County, and State programs) and learn about COVID-19 eviction protections. Bilingual (English/Spanish) support was provided. The locations and times of the events changed throughout the summer based on community feedback. Locations included the Mountain View Senior Center, the Mountain View Community Center, St. Athanasius Church, Rengstorff Park, and City Hall Plaza. Rent Relief Application Assistance Events transitioned to Eviction Help Center Clinics and Pop-up Events starting in August 2021.

Outreach Highlights

- 2,911 public inquires received and responded to by staff.
- 32 *Mountain View Voice* advertisements.

- 1 press release in four languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian).
- 6 news articles.
- 3 webpages in three languages (English, Spanish, and Chinese).
- 3 flyers in four languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian).
- 6 social media posts in English and Spanish.
- 9,000 flyers distributed by community members.
- 87% of survey respondents learned about the services via word-of-mouth from community members and organizations, including distribution of flyers door-to-door.

Eviction Help Center: Clinics, Webinars, and Pop-up Events

On September 23, 2021, the Rent Stabilization Program held the first Eviction Help Center Clinic. The bilingual clinics (in English and Spanish) were originally held every Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Mountain View Public Library in the Program Room. Additional hours were added on Tuesdays due to increased demand through March 2022.

In total, staff held 57 Eviction Help Center Clinics and assisted 794 clients through April 2022. Of those clients, 384 individual households received one-to-one support with State and local rent relief applications. Based on the data provided by the State of California's Housing is Key dashboard, this represents 45% of all State Rent Relief applications for Mountain View.

Additional language support was available and could be requested by the public 48 hours in advance; however, in most cases, if interpretation was needed in Mandarin or Russian, staff was able to accommodate the request immediately or within 24 hours due to the incredible work of the City's Multicultural Engagement Program.

Attendees had the opportunity to complete a customer satisfaction survey after receiving one-to-one support services at the Eviction Help Center. Seventy-six (76) attendees completed the survey. Results were as follows:

- 100% of Respondents Agreed:
 - Staff was helpful and courteous.
 - Workshops and office hours provided helpful information.

- The forms and instructions were useful.
- They were able to find the information they needed.
- They received the support they needed.
- Respondents Shared Feedback:
 - “Very grateful for this program. Staff were uniformly helpful and supportive.”
 - “The person helping me was nice and he helped me with everything in the application and was very understanding. Thank you for the service.”
 - “Agradecidos por el apoyo y la ayuda que la necesitábamos mucho. Confianza en saber que hay dependencias que apoyan a la gente necesitada. Agradecimiento a todo el staff al 100%. [*Grateful for the support and help that we needed very much. Confidence in knowing that there are agencies that support people in need. Thanks to all the staff 100%.*]
 - “Gracias por esta ayuda, y por la información de otros programas. [*Thank you for this help and for the information on other programs.*]

Eviction Basics and Rent Relief webinars were scheduled on a biweekly and monthly basis depending on demand. Landlord-focused webinars were held on Tuesdays; and tenant-focused webinars were held on Wednesdays and were bilingual in English and Spanish. Twenty-three (23) webinars were facilitated by staff reaching 154 community members. Twelve (12) webinars were presented bilingually via continuous translation in English and Spanish.

Staff worked with community organizations and the City’s Community Services Department to schedule additional pop-up events. Staff held or attended 13 pop-up events, reaching 490 community members.

Highlights Include:

- City of Mountain View Monster Bash (100 community members reached).
- Mountain View Los Altos Union High School District Cafecito (36 community members reached).
- Community Services Agency (CSA) Food Distribution at CSA, Castro Mistral Elementary School, and Klein Park (189 community members reached).

- City of Mountain View Multicultural Festival (50 community members reached).

Legal Services

Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto (CLESPA) and the Stanford Community Law Clinic (CLC) agreed to provide pro-bono legal services to qualifying community members at the Eviction Help Center Clinics either in-person or virtually through Zoom. CLESPA and CLC started providing legal assistance for eviction issues since October 7, 2021 and have assisted 155 attendees.

NEXT STEPS

As the COVID-19 related rent relief programs come to an end, the focus of the Eviction Prevention Program will pivot back toward the tenant protections available to Mountain View residents covered by our local rent stabilization and eviction protection laws and ordinances. The creation of the Eviction Help Center, bolstered by the outstanding customer service provided by City staff, proved to be an essential and useful tool to coordinate much of the outreach work already performed by the Rent Stabilization Program. It also offered a consistent touch point for the community and built trust amongst our most vulnerable community members.

Starting in June, the Rent Stabilization Program will launch the Housing and Eviction Help Center (HEHC) in conjunction with the City of Mountain View's Housing Division as well as our community partners. With the goals of the CSFRA in mind, the Center focuses on reducing evictions and promoting community stability by connecting community members with housing support services and resources. As before, community members can access information, receive one-to-one support, and connect with services provided by our community partners.

The Center will be open on the first and third Thursday of the month from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Mountain View Public Library. On the first Thursday of the month, local organizations, including the City of Mountain View's Housing Division, County of Santa Clara's Eviction Diversion Program, CHAC, and Catholic Charities will provide one-to-one support and informational assistance to attendees. On the third Thursday of the month, staff, with the support of local organizations, will host hybrid, interactive workshops focused on different housing topics such as: *How to apply for Below Market Rate housing; Habitability Concerns; and Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodations*. Representatives from the Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto (CLESPA), Community Services Agency of Mountain View and Los Altos (CSA), Project Sentinel, and the Mountain View Mediation Program will attend on both days.

Over the course of the past year, the Eviction Prevention Program outreach methods proved to be a valuable tool for establishing and building connections with the community. The Rent Stabilization Program plans to build on this momentum through the workshops offered at the

HEHC, targeted and specialized communication with landlords and tenants in an effort to reduce evictions, and pop-up events attended or hosted by staff during the new fiscal year.

At this time, CLSEPA has committed to continue to provide no-cost legal assistance to support the clients attending the Housing and Eviction Help Center. Staff anticipates a change in client need towards legal assistance in the coming months. Additionally, based on client demographics, the need for translation support will not dissipate with a change in services provided.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Housing and Eviction Help Center does not require dedicated funds from the CSFRA/MHRSO budgets since staff has requested a contribution of \$100,000 from the City through its ARPA funds.

PUBLIC NOTICING—Agenda posting.

PB-AvD/JS/1/CDD/RHC

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- Attachments:
1. April 2022 Eviction Prevention Program Infographic
 2. RHC Meeting Memo Update on Eviction Prevention Program, October 18, 2021