

Rent Relief Panel Biographies

Martin Eichner

Martin Eichner was the Director of Dispute Resolution Programs for Project Sentinel for twelve years, ending in 2013. During his tenure at Project Sentinel, Mr. Eichner was responsible for local tenant-landlord mediation programs in twelve different Northern California jurisdictions. The programs in Fremont, Campbell and Palo Alto require mandatory mediation between tenants and landlords in certain types of disputes. A fourth program in the Town of Los Gatos includes modified rent control for rental properties of three or more units and a mobile home park. Since leaving Project Sentinel, he has continued to work as a mediator and arbitrator for these programs as well as for the City of Hayward rent control program.

Mr. Eichner played a role in drafting the rent control ordinance and regulations for Los Gatos and the mandatory mediation ordinance in Palo Alto. He has also created and presented a number of training programs on tenant-landlord issues.

Melissa Morris

Melissa Morris is a Senior Attorney with the Public Interest Law Firm and the Fair Housing Law Project of the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley in San Jose, California. Her practice includes litigation and policy advocacy around a variety of civil rights issues, including housing discrimination, voting rights, predatory lending, affordable housing, the rights of individuals with disabilities in licensed care facilities, and access to public benefits. Ms. Morris began her legal career in 2004 as a Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging Fellow at Legal Aid of Marin, where she represented low-income and senior residents of Marin County. She joined the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley in late 2005.

Joshua Howard

Joshua Howard is the Senior Vice President, Local Government Affairs for the California Apartment Association and serves as the Executive Director of its Tri-County Division. Locally, CAA's membership includes over 3,500 property management companies, developers, real estate investment trusts, and individual property owners. Prior to joining CAA, he served as Vice President, Public Policy for the San Jose/Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce and as a senior aide to a former San Jose City Councilmember.

Mr. Howard has over ten years of experience with the regional and local rental housing market, has served on several regional and statewide committees on housing, and speaks often to various groups on the state of the market and housing policy options to address affordability. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science from Santa Clara University and a Master's in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco.