

DATE: January 23, 2025

TO: Rental Housing Committee

FROM: Patricia Black, Senior Management Analyst
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SUBJECT: Rent Stabilization Division Annual Update of Outreach and Education Program

RECOMMENDATION

Provide the Rental Housing Committee with an annual informational update on the Outreach and Education Program of the Rent Stabilization Division, including summaries of the activities conducted in Fiscal Year 2023-24 and the activities planned for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

BACKGROUND

The Rental Housing Committee (RHC) has requested annual updates to stay informed of the Rent Stabilization Division's (Division) efforts to educate and inform the Mountain View community of the tenant protection laws/programs in the City, including the Community Stabilization and Fair Rent Act (CSFRA) and the Mobile Home Rent Stabilization Ordinance (MHRSO), Tenant Relocation Assistance, the Housing Help Center, and the Mountain View Mediation Program. This presentation provides an overview of tasks completed in Fiscal Year 2023-24 and a road map of activities to be implemented during Fiscal Year 2024-25. The RHC last received a similar presentation during its January 2024 meeting, which covered the activities completed by the Division in Fiscal Year 2022-23 with an outline of planned activities for Fiscal Year 2023-24.

DISCUSSION

The ability for community members to access protections available under the CSFRA and the MHRSO, and for landlords and park owners to understand their rights, responsibilities, and how to comply with the requirements, depends on their knowledge of the laws. Effective communications, education, and outreach can significantly help the community understand and implement its responsibilities and access their rights accordingly. Therefore, the Division implements a robust Outreach and Education Program to help support the success of residents, landlords, and park owners.

Goal, Objectives, and Strategies

The goal of the Outreach and Education Program is to increase community awareness and understanding of the tenant protections in Mountain View. This all-encompassing goal allows staff the flexibility to adequately address the programs we implement, including the CSFRA Rent Stabilization Program, the MHRSO Rent Stabilization Program, Tenant Relocation Assistance, the Housing Help Center, and the Mountain View Mediation Program. Staff focuses on three primary objectives that guide the implementation strategies for the activities that staff performs throughout the year.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the Outreach and Education Program’s Goal, Objectives, and Strategies.

Table 1: Outreach and Education Program’s Goal, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal: Increase community awareness and understanding of the tenant protections in Mountain View.

<p>Objective 1: Develop consistent materials that clearly communicate tenant protections, programs, and services.</p>	<p>Objective 2: Increase engagement to better inform the community.</p>	<p>Objective 3: Foster transparency and trust in the community.</p>
<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and distribute materials to inform the public of tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities under local laws and regulations. 	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple methods for responding to questions and concerns from, and providing information to, community members. • Deliver presentations, workshops, and community meetings. • Engage vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members. • Utilize multiple modes of communication. • Foster relationships with community organizations. 	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate updates and major changes to affected parties and the broader landlord/tenant community. • Evaluate outreach and education program outcomes.

Materials and communications provided by the Division, ranging from informative emails to detailed petition forms and workbooks, are created with the intent to maximize understanding of the tenant protection laws and to do so as clearly as possible. Staff continuously reviews and revises program materials throughout the year based on community feedback and Division updates. The majority of the materials are offered in Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian, the three primary languages spoken by residents of Mountain View other than English.

Summary of Outreach Activities in Fiscal Year 2023-24

The following provides a summary of the outreach and education activities performed during Fiscal Year 2023-24 compared with Fiscal Year 2022-23. For a full overview, please reference the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Activity Report (Attachment 1).

Table 2: Summary of Outreach and Education Activities Performed in Fiscal Year 2023-24 compared with Fiscal Year 2022-23

	Fiscal Year 2022-23	Fiscal Year 2023-24	Percent Change
Public Inquiries	2,954	3,440	16.5%
Top Categories			
Tenant Petitions	428	850	98.6%
Property Registration	640	462	(27.8%)
Targeted Mailings	3,122	5,865	87.9%
Educational Workshops	30	29	(3.3%)
Total Attendees	153	347	126.8%
Housing Help Center and Office Hours	76	91	19.7%
Total Attendees	310	340	9.7%
Outreach Events	63	109	73.0%
Total Community Members Engaged	3,091	4,167	34.8%

Highlights of Fiscal Year 2023-24 include:

- Responded to Public Inquires: The increase in petition-related inquiries correlates with the high increase in tenant petition filings. Fiscal Year 2023-24 saw the greatest level of filings to date since the start of the Division (Objective 2).
- Expanded attendance at outreach events to include events targeted toward vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members, including the Second Harvest Brown Bag for low-income seniors and Hope’s Corner Breakfast Distribution for individuals facing or at risk of homelessness (Objective 2).

- Enhanced outreach to families with school-aged children by attending additional school-based events at several campuses, such as back-to-school nights, open houses, and Día del Mundial Niño (Objective 2).
- Held the third annual Summer Community Kickoff, a family-friendly, housing-focused resource fair, in collaboration with our community partner organizations (Objective 2):
 - Four hundred fifty (450) community members learned about housing and support resources available in the community.
- Strengthened consistent digital communication by executing e-newsletters, workshop information registration updates, and program update emails (Objective 2).
- Tracked and compiled Outreach and Education Program data to further provide comparative analyses between fiscal years (Objective 3).
- Implemented customer service feedback surveys (Objective 3):
 - 97% of clients that were helped in the office agreed that they received the support they needed.
 - 97.8% of all clients agreed that staff was helpful and courteous.
 - 97% of Help Center attendees agreed that the information provided helped them.
 - 100% of tenant petitioners felt that the forms and instructions provided were useful.
 - Tenant Petitioner Testimonial: “I want to thank City staff from the bottom of my heart for their help and assistance here. This is the first time I have ever tried this, and I am very impressed by their professionalism, dedication, and kindness. Thank you all again so much! This experience makes me very proud to say that I live in Mountain View, California!”
 - Help Center Attendee Testimonial: “Very efficient and prompt in attending to my needs and making me feel welcome and taken care of, thank you.”
 - Workshop Attendee Testimonial: “Thank you for your excellent presentation. Your communication style and presentations are easy to follow and flow well. The Zoom really helps make the daunting exercise less overwhelming.”

Apart from the annual activities, in Fiscal Year 2023-24, the Outreach and Education Program also performed the following activities:

- Developed and implemented an outreach campaign to educate all landlords and tenants of fully covered CSFRA properties of the regulations that significantly impacted utility charges and the required process to file the One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition for landlords to comply with the law (Objective 1):
 - Designed and distributed materials to inform the public of changes to utility billing through various mediums to meet the communication needs of a diverse audience, including:
 - o Mailing two utility update letters to the property owners of 678 fully covered CSFRA properties with a detailed summary of regulations, visual implementation plan, and methods to connect with the Division for more information;
 - o Mailing two postcards to landlords and two postcards to tenants to inform the community of key points of regulations and workshops regarding utilities;
 - o Distributing a half-sheet handout with information about changes in utilities at in-person community events;
 - o Integrating utility billing information in Division communications to the public, such as the Rental Housing Fee invoicing packet and biannual newsletters;
 - o Sending nine emails to the public related to utility billing updates, workshops, and resources; and
 - o Translating key materials, such as information sheets, letters, and half-sheet handouts, in Spanish and Chinese.
 - Facilitated three workshops for tenants and three workshops for landlords with major updates and information about the upcoming petition process with 165 total attendees.
 - Launched a new resource hub webpage that includes a summary of regulations, information on the petition process, downloadable videos of workshops, and other relevant resources, including forms, materials, and information sheets.
 - Developed supporting petition materials for the launch of the One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition in Fiscal Year 2024-25.

- Redesigned the Rent Stabilization website to help communicate important information more clearly and increase the ease of navigation, including (Objective 1):
 - Publishing landing pages for landlords and tenants to access the information that is most relevant to them;
 - Creating and updating nine webpages with the most up-to-date information; and
 - Refining information around frequently requested topics from the public, such as compliance, healthy and safe housing, and rent increases. Feedback from the public and other jurisdiction suggests that the updated website design yields a better user experience.
- Expanded and updated the CSFRA Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to accurately reflect the most current information for the public (Objective 1):
 - FAQs are used frequently by staff to respond to inquiries from landlords and tenants; and
 - Published a collapsible, easy-to-read version on the webpage with PDF versions in English, Spanish, and Chinese.
- Conducted a targeted outreach campaign to landlords about registration requirements, program updates, and noticing and compliance requirements (Objective 1):
 - Increased 2024 fee payment, registration, and compliance outreach and education, resulting in the highest registration and fee payment compliance to date (see Table 3).

Table 3: Compliance for 2022 through 2024 Billing and Registration Cycles

	2022 Cycle	2023 Cycle	2024 Cycle
Registration Compliance	42%	88%	94%
Annual Fee Payment Compliance	93%	95%	95%

- Launched the bimonthly Housing Help Center for Landlords in October 2023 in order to increase engagement with the landlord community and provide individual support with petitions, registration, and rent increases among other topics. Held 17 clinics and helped 34 landlords (Objective 2).

Fiscal Year 2024-25 Outreach and Education Program Plan

The goal, objectives, and strategies outlined will continue in Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Highlights of major tasks planned for the fiscal year include, but are not limited to:

- Continuing to implement an outreach campaign to educate landlords of fully covered CSFRA properties of the utility billing regulations and the required process to file the One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition for landlords to comply with the law:
 - Collaborating with landlords to test the petition materials and process design (status: under way);
 - Designing and distributing materials to inform landlords of One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition through various mediums, including:
 - Mailing newsletters, postcards, and handouts (status: under way);
 - Integrating utility billing information in Division communication to landlords, such as the Rental Housing Fee invoicing packet and biannual newsletters (status: under way);
 - Sending emails related to utility billing updates, workshops, and resources (status: under way); and
 - Maintaining translation of key materials in Spanish and Chinese (status: under way).
 - Maintaining and updating the utilities webpage to serve as a resource hub, including petition process and regulation updates, resources, forms and additional materials, and video recordings of workshops (status: under way).
 - Facilitating educational virtual landlord-focused workshops and tutorials on how to complete the petition forms and what to expect throughout the process (status: under way).
 - Enhancing the staff support for landlords by offering weekly (rather than bimonthly) Housing Help Centers for Landlords hosted by the Division, which can be attended in person or virtually (status: under way).
 - Conducting targeted outreach to landlords based on the submission due dates of the One-Time Utility Adjustment Petitions, such as direct contact through phone and email (status: under way).

- Developing and implementing an outreach campaign to inform the tenant community on the impact of the One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition:
 - Designing and distributing materials to inform tenants of One-Time Utility Adjustment Petition through various mediums, such as mailings and e-newsletters (status: under way).
 - Facilitating virtual tenant-focused workshops (status: under way).
 - Working with community groups to share educational materials about what tenants can expect (status: upcoming).
 - Developing concise educational materials that communicate key points for tenants (status: upcoming).
- Implementing an outreach campaign to inform landlords of registration and fee payment requirements and related compliance and enforcement mechanisms:
 - Including information in an annual invoicing insert and biannual newsletter (status: complete).
 - Facilitating in-person and virtual Registration and Fee Payment Workshops (status: under way).
 - Updating video tutorials and user guides (status: under way).
 - Conducting targeted outreach to landlords on registration requirements, program updates, noticing requirements, and compliance requirements (status: under way).
 - Mailing compliance letters for properties out of compliance with the CSFRA or MHRSO to landlords and tenants (status: under way).
- Engaging vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members:
 - Distributing accessible materials in Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian within the community and add high-touch locations, such as laundromats and grocery stores (status: under way).
 - Connecting with the Chinese-speaking community via the Multicultural Engagement Program and known community members to perform targeted outreach to better inform the community about applicable laws (status: under way).

- Developing realtor-specific trainings and materials (status: under way).
- Evaluating Outreach and Education Program outcomes:
 - Comparatively analyzing Quarterly Activity Reports, Housing Help Center data, and customer satisfaction surveys (status: under way).

FISCAL IMPACT

Providing this informational update to the Rental Housing Committee has no fiscal impact.

PUBLIC NOTICING—Agenda posting, posting on the City’s website, and email to distribution list.

PB-AP-AvD/KG/1/HSN/RHC
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Attachment: 1. Rent Stabilization Division Fiscal Year 2023-24 Activity Report