

Rental Registry Program Community Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement Summary – November 2023

Staff conducted community outreach and stakeholder engagement on the Rental Registry Program. The City also hosted public hearings to gain feedback on the Rental Registry Program, including before the Human Relations Commission on September 23, 2021 and May 24, 2023, the Planning & Transportation Commission on April 28, 2021 and May 31, 2023, City Council on November 8, 2021, November 15, 2021, and November 29, 2021, the Policy & Services Committee on September 13, 2022, and the Housing Ad Hoc on August 31, 2023. Additional community feedback is anticipated at forthcoming City Council meetings. Staff prepared a summary of the public comment themes received on the City's RRP webpage.¹

Initial Stakeholder Interviews

Staff conducted a series of initial stakeholder interviews in Fall 2022 with rental unit property owners (California Apartment Association representatives), renter advocacy groups (Palo Alto Renters Association and SV@Home), and renter service providers (LifeMoves and Project Sentinel/Palo Alto Mediation Program). The detailed feedback themes were reported to the P&S Committee in their September 13, 2022 staff report. Themes included requests for specific types of outreach for the RRP to address cost and privacy concerns, as well as for the RRP to collect information on rents, rent increases, and evictions. Among other items, the detailed feedback themes helped inform:

- the preparation of the draft Rental Registry Program ordinance, including:
 - the draft findings and the draft broad purpose statements that discuss the need for the rental registry,
 - the inclusion of privacy in the ordinance, and
 - the inclusion of the administrative penalty process to try to reduce RRP registration costs,
- the preparation of the City's rental registry RFP and the organization of the draft illustrative example of an initial rental unit registration form, which both reflect the desire to minimize the time and effort it would take for landlords to register rental units, and
- staff efforts to reach all landlords in the City, including through mailing of Community Meeting postcard notices to all properties listed as a rental unit in the City's geographic information system.

Renter and Landlord Survey – Fall 2022/Winter 2023

Staff initiated a Renter and Landlord Survey – Fall 2022/Winter 2023. This short survey was oriented toward learning more about renters and landlords in Palo Alto, publicizing overall rental unit policy development work, and asking a few questions that will help with future community outreach efforts for the RRP.

¹ Rental Registry Program webpage: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Planning-Development-Services/Housing-Policies-Projects/Renter-Protection-Policy-Development/Rental-Registry-Program>.

Staff received 204 surveys from renters (1/3) and property owners/managers (2/3). Approximately half of survey respondents were interested in receiving regular rental policy-related updates.

In the survey, staff placed information about the City's tenant/landlord mediation services program and the local Tenant Relocation Assistance (TRA) requirements. The mediation services program is long-standing for many years and the local TRA requirements has been in effect since 2018. Staff found that almost half of the respondents were not aware of the City's mediation services program and almost three-quarters of respondents were not aware of the City's local TRA requirements. These initial survey results have helped to inform staff on the increased degree of community engagement efforts needed to ensure awareness of existing City rental policies for both renters and property owners/property managers, as well as the anticipated significant community outreach effort necessary to inform community members of any new rental policies, such as the implementation of the RRP.

Community Meeting

Staff conducted a virtual community meeting on March 30, 2023 that included at least 50 participants throughout the meeting. The meeting was targeted toward rental unit landlords and rental unit property managers. In summary, a significant amount of the feedback received at the meeting pertained to concerns about registry implementation, including its cost, privacy, and administration of the program. Other community members expressed support for the RRP, indicating its value in providing information to support policy development. Specific questions and feedback received can be found by watching the meeting video recording.²

Staff utilized the feedback discussion to prepare responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) asked by community members, including the question "What types of community feedback has staff received on the RRP thus far?" Refer to the FAQs on the City RRP webpage for more information.³

Additional Engagement Efforts

In addition to providing information on the City's website, staff included a brief promotion of the City's overall rental policy development work, including the RRP, in the November 2022 and May 2023 Utility & Community Announcements.⁴ The City's Communications Team has also included the RRP and other renter policy work in community newsletters.

Prior to the March 30 Community Meeting and public hearings, staff sent email notifications to

² Rental Registry Program Community Meeting – March 30, 2023:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCnH03Eb9Tg>.

³ Rental Registry Program webpage: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Departments/Planning-Development-Services/Housing-Policies-Projects/Renter-Protection-Policy-Development/Rental-Registry-Program>.

⁴ Utilities Department Utility & Community Announcements (UCAs) are short promotional blurbs included in monthly residential bills. The November 2022 and May 2023 Utility & Community Announcements are online: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/utilities/bill-inserts/nov-2022-uca.pdf> and <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/utilities/bill-inserts/may-2023-uca.pdf>.

stakeholders and those community members requesting rental policy-related updates to encourage participation. In addition to the many questions and comments received at the Community Meeting and public hearings, staff received over 70 emails from community members specifically regarding the RRP. While some emails did not support creation of an RRP, most emails were in favor of creating a rental registry. The feedback themes from these emails were also incorporated into the FAQs on the City RRP webpage.

Future stakeholder engagement will include additional individual stakeholder meetings with the California Apartment Association and the Palo Alto Renters' Association and others, as well as additional community meetings where various stakeholders and community members may attend.