

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CARMELITA HOWARD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: PROPOSED FEE BASED RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Housing and Community Services Department that the Council hold a study session to receive a presentation on various options for a fee-based Rental Inspection Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to present a proposed fee-based Rental Inspection Program as a component of Santa Rosa's comprehensive housing strategy. The proposed program is modelled after the Sacramento model as recommended by the California Apartment Association group. Outreach was completed, and program design was discussed with California Apartment Association (CAA) and North Bay Association of Realtors (NORBAR), tenant advocacy and different community groups. Suggestions are included as consideration in the presentation. Subject to Council's direction, staff will return in November 2019 with a draft ordinance and potential adoption.

BACKGROUND

1. The Council of the City of Santa Rosa adopted a comprehensive housing strategy as part of its Tier 1 housing goals. A component of the housing strategy is to adopt a local ordinance that safeguards the health and safety of all rental units.
2. Given the increased housing cost burden faced by many Santa Rosa residents exacerbated by the 2017 wildfires, and complaints received regarding sub-standard conditions of rental units, Council expressed an interest in developing a rental inspection program as part of the sixteen specific deliverables of the housing strategy to be completed by 2023.

PROPOSED FEE BASED RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

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3. The proposed Rental Inspection Program was first introduced to Council at a Study Session on April 5, 2016 during a Code Enforcement presentation as a tool to improve the quality of the rental housing stock and create a policy that provides safe, decent and sanitary housing for all rental units in Santa Rosa.

ANALYSIS

1. Based on the US Census 2015 American Community Survey, Santa Rosa has an estimated 67,396 housing units, 31,339 of which are occupied by renters. From July of 2018 to June of 2019, the Code Enforcement Division received 213 complaints with substandard housing component as part of the 995 received for the fiscal year 2018/2019. The NRP program inspected 1000 units and 700 units had health and safety violations.
2. Outreach was held with the rental property and real estate owners' groups, tenant advocates and different community organizations to seek input and recommendations of a successful program.
3. Management Partners compiled best practices for rental inspection programs from comparable cities as part of the code enforcement study completed in 2017. Based on the study and feedback from stakeholders, staff will discuss the following components for Santa Rosa's Program based on outreach and recommendations from the different stakeholders.
 - Rental Inspection Standards will be modeled after Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP)
 - Registration and Rental Inspection Fees – All property owners in Santa Rosa will be required to register for the Program and pay a rental inspection fee.
 - Inspections and Compliance – Property owners will be allowed to self-certify after they pass an initial inspection for single family dwelling units. All rental units will be inspected at least once every five years and 20% of all self-certified units will be inspected annually. If a rental unit fails inspection and health and safety code violations are discovered, the unit will be referred to the Code Enforcement division for follow up.
 - Education – To achieve success, an aggressive education component will be offered to all neighborhoods in the City before registration and implementation.
4. Staff is seeking direction on Council's interest to advance the proposed Program. Subject to Council direction staff will return in November with a draft ordinance for consideration and potential adoption.

FISCAL IMPACT

The study session is for information only and no action is being taken, therefore, there is no fiscal impact at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

None

CONTACT

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