

# STAFF REPORT



## CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

---

**DATE:** October 15, 2024

**TO:** Justin Hess, City Manager

**FROM:** Joseph H. McDougall, City Attorney  
By: Jill Vander Borght, Senior Assistant City Attorney

**SUBJECT:** Update on Housing Enforcement Unit

---

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Note and file.

### **BACKGROUND**

On May 7, 2024, the City Attorney's Office (CAO) and Community Development Department (CDD) presented a Discussion Paper to City Council (Council) as part of the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget process requesting funding to create a Housing Enforcement Program. The proposed program includes two new positions in the CAO and three new positions in CDD designed to coordinate and provide tenant resources, accept housing complaints, investigate housing complaints and habitability concerns, and initiate administrative and civil enforcement on behalf of the City to abate violations of law. Council approved funding for the Program at \$650,000 per year on a recurring basis.

On May 21, 2024, a Supplemental Memo to the Housing Enforcement Program Budget Discussion Paper was presented to Council requesting \$100,000 in one-time funding for a Low-Income Legal Services Pilot Program. Council approved funding for the pilot program to provide no-cost mediation for landlord-tenant disputes that are outside the scope of the Housing Enforcement Program through a fixed-fee private legal mediation panel, offer grants to reimburse qualifying low-income tenants or landlords for legal representation in at-fault eviction proceedings, and provide a community mediation training to the Landlord Tenant Commission.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Hiring*

The Housing Enforcement Unit will hire five new staff members across three different disciplines. The CDD Housing section is hiring two new positions, a Social Services Supervisor, and a Housing Services Assistant. The Housing Services Assistant Position interviews were conducted the first week of October, with the process to continue until filled. The first phase of the Social Services Supervisor position recruitment has been completed. The position is expected to be filled in early 2025.

The CDD Building section is hiring a Code Compliance Inspector II. The first round of interviews was completed on September 16, 2024, and a second round of interviews are anticipated to be completed in October or early November.

The CAO is hiring two new positions, a Senior Assistant City Attorney and a Legal Assistant. The Senior Assistant City Attorney position offer has been made to the selected candidate and accepted, with a start date forthcoming. The Legal Assistant recruitment is open and ongoing. Applications have and will continue to be rated and reviewed in batches, and interviews will be scheduled for qualified applicants.

### *Low-Income Legal Services*

Separately, the CAO is finalizing solicitations for mediators for the Low-Income Legal Services Pilot Program offering free half-day mediation services. The solicitation will be posted in various newspapers and sent to the Burbank Tenants Union, Housing Rights Center, and local apartment associations. CAO anticipates receiving applications from qualified attorneys by late-October and reviewing the first round of submissions the following month, in mid-November.

A grant program for qualifying low-income legal representation in at-fault eviction proceedings is awaiting definition by future staff in the Housing Enforcement Unit.

Community mediation training for the Landlord Tenant Commission would be explored and implemented once all other aspects of our local Program are functional.

### *Ongoing Tenant Protection Enforcement*

Meanwhile, Housing and CAO continue to accept, review, and enforce on the City's new tenant protection ordinance. CAO sent three notices of violation and rejected one in response to tenant complaints in September 2024.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This activity involves organizational and administrative activities of the government related to personnel, hiring tenant protection strategies which have no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably

foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. As such, this action is not a “project” subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) 14 Cal. Code Regs § 15378.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact from this report.

**CONCLUSION**

Staff continue to work to hire and build the new Housing Enforcement Unit that Council funded. Concurrently, existing CDD and CAO staff are working to ensure the City’s new tenant protections are being followed, and habitability complaints are investigated and corrected.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None.