

Details

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On agenda: 3/17/2015
Title: Update on the Process Regarding Impact of Rising Rents in Alameda. (Community Development 7010)

Text

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Update on the Process Regarding Impact of Rising Rents in Alameda. (Community Development 7010)

Body

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: John A. Russo, City Manager

Re: Update on the Process Regarding Impact of Rising Rents in Alameda

BACKGROUND

In September 2014, the City Council agreed to a community process, to be led by Mr. Jeff Cambra, to better understand if residential rents in Alameda were increasing significantly and, if that were the case, to suggest strategies to ameliorate adverse effects on tenants. Over the following four months, Mr. Cambra held a series of community meetings out of which stakeholder groups were identified. The stakeholder groups, comprised primarily of housing providers and tenants, prepared five broadly worded concepts, with the suggestion that these concepts could be developed more specifically and be included either in the City's Municipal Code or in the City's Rent Review Advisory Committee (RRAC) program and process. Mr. Cambra presented those proposed concepts to the City Council on January 20, 2015.

Following a presentation by Mr. Cambra and after receiving comments from community members, the City Council directed staff to prepare the necessary amendments to the Alameda Municipal Code (AMC) and, to the extent applicable, to integrate the concepts into the RRAC program and procedures. In addition, staff was directed to prepare a recommendation for City Council consideration regarding additional analytical work that should be done to better understand the impacts of rising rents on long-term residents, seniors, very low- and low-income renters, and the extent of the problem of increasing rents over time. The City Council requested that the work be completed in 90 days.

This staff report provides an update on staff's progress.

DISCUSSION

Staff from the City Attorney's Office and the Community Development Department met with Mr. Cambra to transition the work from the community-led effort to the technical phase of drafting amendments to the AMC and/or revising RRAC's program and procedures. Mr. Cambra shared information from other jurisdictions that he had gathered as part of his work and staff explained how it would move forward with its analysis.

As part of that meeting, Mr. Cambra requested an opportunity to reconvene the community stakeholder groups to present staff's proposed recommendations and solicit input from the groups prior to staff's presentation to the City Council. If the City Council supports this request, staff will work with Mr. Cambra to continue to engage the community and stakeholders in this process. While the City Council requested that staff publish its report by the end of April, staff believes that the requested community process, if that is Council direction, will require additional time. An additional 30-60 days may be necessary to accommodate this process. Therefore, it is likely that staff will present to the City Council proposed amendments to the AMC, revisions to the RRAC program and procedures, and a recommendation regarding additional quantitative analysis regarding the impacts of rising rents by early summer. If the City Council concludes that there has been sufficient community engagement on this issue, staff will be prepared to publish the staff report on April 23, for City Council action at the May 5, 2015 meeting, which is consistent with the City Council's previous direction.

Staff is requesting that the City Council provide direction regarding Mr. Cambra's request that the proposed AMC amendments and/or revisions to the RRAC program and procedures be presented to the stakeholder groups prior to City Council consideration and potential action on those items.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund to provide direction to staff regarding the process for proposing amendments to the AMC and to address potential revisions to the RRAC program and procedures.

MUNICIPAL CODE/POLICY DOCUMENT CROSS REFERENCE

The analysis of the impacts of rising rents and the City Council direction to prepare amendments to the AMC to improve the RRAC program is consistent with the City's Housing Element and the existing RRAC mission.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Council action on this request is not a project under CEQA in that it is a continuing administrative activity concerning general policy and procedures and therefore no environmental review is required. CEQA Guidelines, section 15378 (b)(2).

RECOMMENDATION

Consider Mr. Cambra's request to present to the stakeholder groups staff's recommended amendments to the AMC and/or revisions to the RRAC program and procedures prior to City Council's review and potential action and thereafter provide direction to staff.

Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Potter, Community Development Director

Financial Impact section reviewed,
Elena Adair, Finance Director

