

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Tenant Outreach Proposal for the
City of East Palo Alto
- February 10, 2010 -

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA) proposes to enter into an agreement with the City of East Palo Alto to work together with the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program, the Code Enforcement Division, and the Building Services of the City of East Palo Alto to conduct community outreach and education about the rights and responsibilities of tenants in East Palo Alto.

This proposal has two components. First, CLSEPA will conduct outreach and education about local housing code enforcement issues to promote healthy, safe, and clean living conditions for residents of East Palo Alto. We will create easy to read and straightforward materials for tenants about their rights and responsibilities to maintain safe and habitable homes and apartments. This information will include: the requirements of state and local laws to maintain safe living conditions, including relevant requirements of rent stabilization and code enforcement; how to use legal processes, such as the code enforcement process, rent board processes, and small claims court, to rectify potential violations; and practical solutions to tackling common habitability problems like rats, roaches and vermin, mold and mildew, water leaks, and plumbing problems. We will update existing written materials for tenants, and conduct outreach and information sessions and individual counseling for tenants.

Second, we will continue the outreach and education about tenants' rights and responsibilities under the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program and California laws. We propose to update currently existing materials and create new materials to explain the Rent Stabilization Ordinance and Rules and Regulations in clear language, the impact the recent court decisions have had on the local rules, and to update the community with regards to the Page Mill Properties cases. Using these tools, we will also conduct community presentation to educate tenants about their rights and responsibilities under East Palo Alto's Ordinances and California laws.

Furthermore, we will endeavor to ensure that East Palo Alto tenants are aware of their rights under City, State and Federal law if their landlord is foreclosed upon. We will create and update existing materials on the rights and responsibilities of occupants and new owners after the property has been subject to foreclosure proceedings.

Problem and Goals

Tenants in East Palo Alto lack access to information they need to help them make good decisions about the conditions of the housing units they live in. Generally, the housing stock in East Palo Alto suffers from lack of maintenance and old age. Some homeowners seeking to rent out all or part of their homes are not aware of their responsibilities to secure permits to make additions or substantial rehabilitation to their homes; others are unaware of the repercussions to making shoddy and unpermitted repairs. Similarly,

some owners of apartment complexes do not keep their apartment complexes in good repair. Tenants who live in both single-family homes and apartments do not always know about their rights to live in safe and secure housing, the health and safety consequences of living in uninhabitable conditions, nor do they know about their options of what to do if their housing lacks basic habitability.

Tenants are also confused about recent court decisions compromising the local Rent Stabilization Ordinance. For instance, it is unclear what amount of rents tenants should be paying, what impact a receivership has on the existing tenancies, and legal remedies if their rental units are foreclosed.

Foreclosure rates in East Palo Alto are among the highest in the region. In general, residents are unaware of the rights and responsibilities of renters and the new owners after the property title has been transferred through foreclosure proceedings. Furthermore, occupants are often easy targets of unscrupulous real estate agents who engage in threatening and sometime unlawful actions to remove a renter post-foreclosure

In addition to increasing awareness among East Palo Alto tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities and the procedures under the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program, CLSEPA seeks to:

- Increase awareness among East Palo Alto tenants regarding housing resources in the City of East Palo Alto and the County of San Mateo.
- Educate East Palo Alto tenants regarding how to make and keep their housing files to be able to effectively exercise their legal rights as tenants.
- Educate East Palo Alto tenants regarding the necessary legal steps that they should and can take when they decide to terminate a tenancy.
- Educate tenants regarding possible housing code enforcement violations.
- Educate tenants to identify factors that make a building substandard.
- Educate residents about the rights and responsibilities of new property owners and occupants after foreclosure proceedings.

Community Education

Tenant Community Presentations and Workshop

Over the course of five months, CLSEPA will direct, coordinate, and participate in **three educational presentations** for tenants on topics covered by the Rent Stabilization Ordinance of the City of East Palo Alto such as rent levels, entering into new contracts, and good cause for evictions and eviction proceedings.

At the beginning of each community presentation, CLSEPA will introduce and make a presentation on a previously selected topic. This will provide tenants with the basic concepts and understanding of the topic to be discussed. Once the topic has been presented, CLSEPA attorneys and staff will answer questions that tenants and the public audience may have.

CLSEPA will provide a Spanish interpreter for these presentations.

CLSEPA will coordinate and collaborate with the Building Services, the Housing Department, and the Code Enforcement Division of the City East Palo Alto in organizing **a workshop** on habitability, and code enforcement for tenants only. CLSEPA will create and provide educational and guide materials for tenants on code enforcement matters. The Building Services, the Housing Department, and CLSEPA will conduct said workshop.

CLSEPA will hold this workshop in English and Spanish.

The purposes of the above-referred workshop will be to assist the tenants in understanding the code enforcement complaint and resolution processes as well as to the legal and administrative implications. The workshop conductors will particularly explain the different code enforcement forms and notices such complaint and request for permit forms as well as city notices to abate and city and county reports and will assist participants in filling samples of the different forms.

In an effort to reach a greater number of residents, CLSEPA will subcontract with Youth United for Community Action (YUCA) to outreach to, survey, and deliver information packets to all the rental units under the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program.

CLSEPA will also seek the collaboration of other local groups such Fair Rent Now Coalition, and EPACT Education fund, and will seek the collaboration and input of the City's Housing Department.

CLSEPA will also seek the collaboration of landlords to hold community meetings at different apartment complexes.

Develop Brochures

CLSEPA will update and redesign brochures in English and Spanish on housing code enforcement violations, complaint procedures, and potential sanctions.

- Guides for tenants about what they can do to conquer common habitability problems like cockroaches, rats and mice, plumbing problems, mold and mildew.
- Eviction lawsuit legal proceedings, including unlawful detainers.
- Guide for residents on the rights and responsibilities after foreclosure proceedings.

CLSEPA will update and redesign existing brochures in English and Spanish on topics covered by the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Ordinance:

- Rent levels, including an explanation of annual rent adjustments, landlord individual rent adjustments, landlord petition for capital improvement adjustments, Costa-Hawkins rental adjustments, and the impact of recent court decisions for both landlords and tenants.
- Requirement of providing a habitable housing unit, including an explanation of tenant's petition for a rent adjustment for failure to provide adequate services, and legal responsibilities arising for tenants and landlords when damages to the unit have occurred.
- Just cause for eviction and legal right to termination of tenancy when good cause is present.

CLSEPA will update and redesign brochures in English and Spanish on the rights of prospective tenants:

- Guides for tenants about what to look for when signing a new contract, including the provisions required by state law.
- The benefits and costs of signing a new lease or rental agreement.
- Steps tenants should take before signing a new contract, including questions tenants should ask, conducting walk-throughs, creative lists of pre-existing damages to the property.
- Questions landlords are permitted to ask of prospective tenants.

Tentative Schedule

CLSEPA proposes that following schedule that will start in March 2010. Every event will take place every four weeks starting the second week in March.

1.	Community presentation	----	Rent Levels, Certificates, and Recent Court Decisions
2.	Community presentation	----	Good Cause for Eviction and Eviction Proceedings, including post-foreclosure evictions
3.	Community presentation	----	Entering into New Contracts
4.	Workshop	----	Habitability and Code Enforcement

Cost Workshop and Presentations

Personnel Expenses

Budget Per Session

Housing Supervising Attorney	\$750
Housing Paralegal & Coordinator	\$500
Outreach Training and Supervision	\$200
Spanish Interpreter	\$480
Spanish translator	\$250

YUCA Subcontract Outreach	\$750
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Office Expenses

Phone	\$20
Office Supplies	\$100
Refreshments	\$100

Total Per Session	\$3,150
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Total Project Cost	\$12,600
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Mailing and printing costs to be covered by the East Palo Alto Rent Stabilization Program

Please note we are not including any executive director time, overhead office costs, and law student volunteer time is being donated.