

ALAMEDA COUNTY (UNINCORPORATED AREAS) CHALLENGE GRANT SUMMARY

Community-Based Partners	Fellow	Government Partner
<p>Lead Partner: Resources for Community Development</p> <p>Additional Partners: In-Advance; La Familia; Eden United Church of Christ, My Eden Voice, Eden Renters United</p>	<p>Charles Harris</p>	<p>Jennifer Pearce Deputy Director, Housing & Community Development at Alameda County</p>

CONTEXT

The unincorporated areas of Alameda County include Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland, Fairview, Hayward Acres, and San Lorenzo. Lacking their own municipal governments, these communities are instead governed directly by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. These communities have some of the highest rates of poverty, housing instability, health disparities, and lack of civic infrastructure in the region, which come together to complicate community organizing efforts.

POLICY JOURNEY

Prior to the Challenge Grant (CG), Alameda County made the following progress in equitable housing policies:

- **Mobile Home Rent Stabilization Ordinance:** Passed in 2017, this ordinance protects mobile homeowners from excessive rent hikes by park owners, placing a 4% annual limit on rent increases.
- **Mandatory Notification of Rent Mediation Services Ordinance:** Passed in 2003, this ordinance requires owners of residential rental properties of three or more units to include specific language on the availability of rent mediation services on any rent increase notices.
- **Alameda County Healthy Homes Department (HHD):** From 2012–2015, HHD invested nearly \$150,000 in Kresge Foundation grant funding to advance proactive rental inspection policy.

At the start of the CG, the Alameda County CG team decided to pursue the following policies:

- Build off efforts to address lead abatement to design and launch a proactive rental inspection and code enforcement program.
- Fund the Eden Community Land Trust (CLT), an existing effort modeled after the Oakland CLT to purchase market rate affordable homes and convert them to permanent affordable housing.
- Pursue anti-displacement policies to prevent harmful evictions and egregious rent increases.

During the CG period, the Alameda County CG team further refined its housing policy priorities:

- **Proactive Rental Inspection Program**
- **Rent Registry**
- **Expanded Just Cause Eviction Protections**
- **Fair Chance Housing Ordinance**
- **Rent Stabilization**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement took place at two levels: 1) conversations with community stakeholders to better understand what policies they believe are most beneficial and effective; and 2) renter education and feedback on tenant protection priorities, such as preventing displacement & protecting quality housing. CG funding to community-based organizations (**CBO**) was instrumental in allowing CBOs to increase their capacity to engage in leadership development, outreach, community engagement, and canvassing work.

The Fellow created a steering committee with County staff and members of Resources for Community Development (**RCD**). The steering committee was instrumental in advancing the CG policy work. The CG compelled an increase in communication and transparency between RCD and staff at Alameda County, which in turn strengthened the relationship between the two.

POLICY JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Successes

- There was more progress with community advocacy than in the past, with more renters voicing their concerns during community meetings. This is particularly important because the unincorporated County areas did not previously have a strong infrastructure for community organizing.

Compromises

- The rent stabilization measure was tabled due to strong opposition. County officials concluded rent stabilization would be too complicated and expensive to implement, citing the creation of a rent board that would have been required for enforcement.

Challenges

- The Alameda CG team views the local landlords associations as much stronger and better organized than tenant groups in unincorporated areas, which complicates the ability of the CG team to move forward tenant protection policies.

STATUS OF POLICY PRIORITIES (AS OF MARCH 2022)

- The **Proactive Rental Inspection Program** has been presented to multiple Board of Supervisors' committees and is circulating through the public process.
- The **Rent Registry** draft ordinance was heard by the Unincorporated Services Committee in March and will tentatively be going to the Transportation and Planning Committee in May 2022.
- The **Expanded Just Cause Eviction Protections and Fair Chance Housing Ordinances** are prepared to go to the Unincorporated Services Committee meeting in April or May 2022.
- The **Rent Stabilization Ordinance** is tentatively expected to move forward later this year.