



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:  
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Planning and Development  
Department No.: 053  
Agenda Date: May 6, 2025  
Placement: Departmental Agenda  
Estimated Time: 1 Hour  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s): Lisa Plowman, (805) 568-2068  
Contact Info: Jeff Wilson, (805) 568-2085  
**SUBJECT:** Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors (Board):

- a) Approve the introduction (first reading) of "An Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Building Regulations, of the Santa Barbara County Code to Establish the Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program (Pilot Program)" (Case No. 25ORD-00005) included as Attachment B-1;
- b) Read the title "An Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Building Regulations, of the Santa Barbara County Code to Establish the Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program" and waive full reading of the Ordinance, Case No. 25ORD-00005, as shown in Attachment B-1; and
- c) Set a hearing on the Administrative Agenda of May 13, 2025, to:
  - i) Determine that the adoption of the Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program is not subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061 (b)(3), 15309, and 15321, included as Attachment A to this Board Letter;
  - ii) Adopt (second reading) "An Ordinance Amending Chapter 10, Building Regulations, of the Santa Barbara County Code to Establish the Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program" (Case No. 25ORD-00005), included as Attachment B-1; and
  - iii) Direct Planning and Development (P&D) staff to return to the Board prior to the expiration of the ordinance with a report on the results of the Pilot Program and for the Board to provide further direction.

**Summary Text:**

This Board item recommends the adoption of an ordinance to amend Chapter 10, Building Regulations, to add Article XVIII (18) to establish a 12-month pilot rental housing inspection program within the community of Isla Vista. The Pilot Program would allow the County to proactively inspect rental properties in Isla Vista for safety and code violations to ensure all rental units meet basic health and safety standards, hold landlords accountable, and protect tenants from exploitative practices.

The proposed ordinance that establishes this Pilot Program can be found in Attachment B-1 and is further discussed below in Section 1.0 of this Board Letter. The following is a summary of the Pilot Program's framework:

- Enacting regulations
- Registration of rental properties
- Inspections and eligible exemptions
- Enforcement measures

**Background:**

On January 14, 2025, the Board received and filed a report on unsafe and substandard housing conditions of rental housing units in the Isla Vista community and discussed the potential of establishing a pilot rental housing inspection program. At this hearing, the Board directed P&D staff to prepare an ordinance that will establish and implement a proactive pilot rental housing inspection program within the Isla Vista Community to protect the public health, safety and welfare of its residents.

The community of Isla Vista is densely populated and faces significant challenges with substandard housing. With 87% of residents being renters, 96% college-aged, and a poverty rate of 72% as reported in the most recent US Census data, many tenants, especially students living on their own for the first time, are exposed to unsafe living conditions. These issues include rodents, lack of heat, unsafe balconies, decks, and similar conditions, a lack of smoke detectors, and illegal conversions of non-habitable space (illegal lofts) which disproportionately affect vulnerable renters. The current process, which relies on tenants to file complaints about unsafe conditions, often leaves students feeling unsupported and hesitant to take action against potentially retaliatory landlords.

To address these substandard housing concerns, \$600,000 was allocated as part of a settlement between the County of Santa Barbara and the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), for the creation of a pilot rental housing inspection program. The proposed 12-month Pilot Program will allow the County to proactively inspect rental properties in Isla Vista for safety and code violations to ensure that all rental units meet basic health and safety standards, holding landlords accountable and protecting tenants from exploitative practices. More information on the project and fund allocation can be found in Attachment C to this Board Letter. The County of Santa Barbara has not previously initiated a rental housing inspection program due to a lack of funding to support the program and temporary housing options for displaced tenants had not been available. However, because the pilot inspection program is scheduled to occur during the summer months when there may be fewer students impacted and/or displaced from inspections, the County will coordinate with UCSB on temporary housing in the event of any student displacement.

**1.0 Isla Vista Rental Housing Inspection Pilot Program**

The proposed ordinance and framework for the Pilot Program is summarized below.

### *Regulatory Framework*

The regulations that provide provisions to address substandard, unsanitary, and unsafe housing conditions are found in the California Building Code and Santa Barbara County Code Chapter 10 – Building Regulations. Through the adoption of recent updates to Chapter 10, the Board also adopted by reference the 1997 Uniform Housing Code and the 1997 Abatement of Dangerous Building Codes. The 1997 Uniform Housing Code has procedures and provisions to address substandard housing conditions. Additionally, the California Health and Safety Code 17910-17998.3 et. seq. provides further relevant regulations. These State and local regulations set forth provisions for determining substandard housing conditions and procedures to enforce the repair or removal of the substandard conditions.

The proposed ordinance authorizes the County to proactively enforce State and local codes/regulations as currently existing and as may be amended during the course of the Pilot Program. Additionally, the proposed ordinance sets forth additional local provisions for the implementation and enforcement of the Pilot Program.

### *Registration*

Rental housing unit property owners will be required to register each of their rental housing units into the Pilot Program. The Department will develop a registration form and process to assist the property owners in registering the rental units. Property owners will have 45 days from the adoption of the ordinance to register their rental units with the Department.

Rental housing unit registration is intended to provide the Department with the most current and accurate contact information for the property owner. This information will be used to notify property owners of inspections and to provide results of the inspections and any corrective actions needed to be completed.

### *Inspections*

The proposed ordinance directs that the P&D Director, or designee, is authorized to either proactively inspect rental housing units periodically or upon receiving complaints of substandard or unsanitary conditions. The Director can determine which units are to be inspected during the timeframe of this Pilot Program.

If a rental housing unit is selected to be inspected, the property owner or authorized agent will be:

- Notified of an inspection 15 days prior to the scheduled date and time;
- Responsible for notifying the tenant of the upcoming inspection and shall facilitate access to the unit(s); and
- Required to be present during the inspection

The owner or authorized agent may request a one-time extension to the scheduled inspection by the Director. Additionally, if the property owner or authorized agent fails to comply with the requirement of being present for the inspection, the inspection can proceed with the tenant's consent. In addition, the ordinance provides for inspections to occur if the owner or authorized agent fails to respond to inspection notifications or facilitate access by seeking access via an inspection warrant or consent of the tenant.

### *Exemptions from Inspections*

The proposed ordinance outlines certain types of residential rental units that are required to register, but may request an exemption from the Pilot Program inspections:

- a. Newly constructed buildings that have a certificate of occupancy issued in the last 3 years.
- b. Government regulated, subsidized residential rental units or those with government-sponsored financing. These properties are exempt because they are subject to routine inspections related to housing conditions or property maintenance by another government agency or rent subsidized program.

An exemption may be revoked by the Director based on complaints or observations of violations to health and safety standards or codes.

### *Enforcement and Corrections*

Under the proposed ordinance, if violations are observed during an inspection, enforcement actions will follow procedures outlined in the applicable County or State codes related to substandard or unsanitary housing conditions. Violations may result in a correction notice and may be referred to the P&D Code Enforcement Program for separate investigations and enforcement.

### *Penalty and Costs of Enforcement*

Any violations to health and safety codes will follow the procedures in the applicable State or County codes or ordinances. Penalty and enforcement costs related to substandard housing will also follow the procedures and provisions as outlined in the applicable County or State ordinances or regulations. Violations of the proposed ordinance, such as the failure to register or allow an inspection, shall be subject to Chapter 24 A – Administrative Fines, of the County Code.

### *Appeals*

Appeals of inspection determinations or violations as of a result of this Pilot Program will be subject to procedures and provisions outlined in the applicable County or State ordinances or regulations.

### *Pilot Program Timeframe and Evaluation*

The proposed ordinance shall be effective for 12-months from the effective date of the ordinance unless extended, revised, or repealed by the Board prior to the end of the 12-month period. P&D staff will return to the Board at the end of the effective time period to report on the program results and request direction from the Board to extend, revise or repeal the Pilot Program.

### *Fees*

Funding for this Pilot Program will come from designated funds from Santa Barbara County's Agreement with UCSB's Long Range Development Plan. An amount of \$600k has been allocated by the Board to fund this Pilot Program. These funds will support the costs associated with administering the Pilot Program, conducting inspections, and follow-up re-inspections.

Staff recommends that if the program is extended beyond its initial 12-month expiration date, that the Board direct staff to research and develop a fee structure to be adopted and implemented to provide for the program to be funded through a cost recovery funding mechanism.

### *Implementation*

The Pilot Program will be administered under the direction of the P&D Director with support and recommendations from the Building Official and the Department's Code Enforcement Program. In order to perform the initial inspections authorized by this ordinance, the Department will be seeking to contract with independent firms to conduct the inspections. These independent firms can provide qualified inspectors trained in housing, including substandard conditions, and can also identify building and zoning code violations.

The Director will prioritize the rental properties to be inspected during the timeframe of the Pilot Program. The Director may consider which units to inspect first based on the units' location, history of complaints received, proximity to bluff, and other factors deemed relevant by the Director.

The rental housing unit inspections are anticipated to occur during the UCSB summer break and be completed prior to the start of courses in the fall. Although the initial inspections are anticipated to be completed by contract inspectors prior to the commencement of the fall semester at UCSB, it is expected that there may be a number of follow-up inspections and actions needed based on the corrections identified by the initial inspection. These re-inspections will be done by internal staff in the Department's Code Enforcement Program.

## **2.0 Next Steps**

### *Action Steps for Implementation*

Upon the adoption of the Pilot Program the following action items and steps will be implemented:

- A. Circulate a Request for Proposal and contract with independent firms to conduct the Inspections
- B. Develop a webpage and online system for Pilot Program information and registration
- C. Conduct rental property research to identify rental properties to be registered
- D. Property owner registration
- E. Staff-conducted permit history research
- F. Notifications and scheduling of inspections
- G. Perform inspections (anticipated from July to September)
- H. Corrective and enforcement actions following inspections
- I. Re-inspections to verify corrections

### *Report on Pilot Program Results*

Before the Pilot Program expires, P&D will return to the Board and provide a report on the Pilot Program's results. At that time, P&D will seek further direction from the Board on whether to extend the program. If the Board decides to extend the Pilot Program, the Department will seek direction on establishing fees to offset the cost of the program.

### **Fiscal Impacts:**

Costs associated with the implementation and administration of this Pilot Program are included in \$600,000 designated funds from Santa Barbara County's Agreement with UCSB's Long Range Development Plan.

### **Special Instructions:**

P&D will fulfill noticing requirements.

The Clerk of the Board shall provide a copy of the signed ordinance and resolution, and minute order, to P&D, attention: Jeff Wilson, Assistant Director.

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – CEQA Notice of Exemption

**Attachment B** – Resolution of the Board of Supervisors

**Attachment B-1** – Chapter 10, Article XVIII Amendment for Adoption

**Attachment C** – Board Agenda Letter, dated January 14, 2025

**Authored by:**

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