



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/20/2022

File #: 22-1053

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department and DHHS

Agenda Section: Departmental

SUBJECT:

Extend the Current Safe Homes Program (Building Permit Penalty Fee Waiver Program) for Residential and Residential Accessory Structures

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt Resolution No. (Attachment 1), A Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Humboldt Extending the Safe Homes Program through Dec. 31, 2027.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Building permit fees and existing General Fund allocation in the Building Inspections budget unit (1100262-203000 and 1100262-9360)

DISCUSSION:

The current Safe Homes Program was adopted and implemented October of 2017. The goal of this program was to encourage the public to bring unpermitted residential and residential accessory structures into compliance with state and local codes by obtaining after-the-fact building permits. This program incentivizes the public to bring unpermitted structures into compliance by waiving the penalty fees associated with permitting after-the-fact construction.

The Safe Homes Program has been a coordinated effort of both the Planning and Building Department and the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Environmental Health. Since the inception of the program, the Planning and Building Department has issued building permits to legitimize approximately eight residences. The Building Division has also issued approximately 18 after-the-fact permits for residential remodels and residential accessory structures.

In addition to continuing to encourage the public to bring their unpermitted structures into compliance, the Safe Homes Program is identified as an implementation measure in the 2014 General Plan Housing Element for Humboldt County:

“H-IM32. “Safe Homes” Program to Increase Building Code Compliance. The County shall allow qualified unpermitted homes to become permitted through a “safe homes” program. Reduced or eliminated penalty fees for owners wishing to obtain permits for unpermitted homes shall be included as an incentive to bring the unpermitted units into compliance. Responsible Agency: Planning and Building Department. Timeframe: By July 1, 2016.”

The Safe Homes Program is scheduled to expire on Dec. 31, 2022. The Planning and Building Department requests that the program be extended until Dec. 31, 2027.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The building permit fee revenue is estimated at \$ 26,635 for permits issued under the Safe Homes Program. While no penalty revenue was received, the Planning and Building Department is unable to estimate what would have been received because the Building Inspection Division (1100-262) may not have realized any permit revenue without the Safe Homes Program. Penalty fees are a deterrent to compliance and the permits that were issued under the program may not have been issued.

The Department of Health & Human Services - Division of Environmental Health Land Use (1175-486) provides services related to reviewing installation information for existing unpermitted onsite wastewater treatment systems, and approving the design and installation of those systems on a cost recovery basis.

The Building Inspection Division has been able to effectively manage the Safe Homes Program with building permit revenue and the allocated General Fund contribution. The Safe Homes Program has not resulted in additional General Fund requests or allocations. Approval of this extension request will not result in a request for additional General Fund allocations.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board’s Strategic Framework by creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Department of Health and Human Services
County Counsel

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could choose not to extend the program, thereby terminating the Safe Homes Program effective Dec. 31, 2022. This action is not recommended because in addition to meeting an implementation measure in the General Plan Housing Element, the Safe Homes Program encourages compliance with permit regulations by removing the financial barrier that may result from imposing penalty fees.

ATTACHMENTS:

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- Attachment 1: Resolution Extending the Safe Homes Program for the period of December 31, 2022 through December 31, 2027.
- Attachment 2: Safe Homes Regular Permit Process
- Attachment 3: Safe Homes Alternative Owner Builder (AOB) Permit Process
- Attachment 4: Division of Environmental Health (DEH) Draft Informational Handouts
- Attachment 5: Planning Division Draft Informational Handouts

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: J-1

Meeting of: October 24, 2017

File No.: 17-2158