



AGENDA REPORT

Mayor's Office

DATE:	April 19, 2022
TO:	Members of the City Council
FROM:	Mayor Tom Butt
Subject:	Fair access to housing
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	Click or tap here to enter text.
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	Because of credit history, employment status or rental history, persons experiencing homelessness may have an insurmountable barrier to accessing rental housing even if they can afford the amount of rent, perpetuating a state of homelessness.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	DIRECT staff to draft an ordinance for first reading to amend the Richmond's Fair Chance Access to Affordable Housing Ordinance, RMC Chapter 7.110, to eliminate unfair barriers for rental housing applicants – Office of the Mayor (Mayor Tom Butt 510-620-6503).

DISCUSSION:

It is generally accepted that a lack of physical housing exacerbates, or even causes, conditions experienced by a large percentage of homeless persons, including drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, physical health challenges, and unemployment or underemployment.

Housing First is an approach to serving people experiencing homelessness that recognizes a homeless person must first be able to access a decent, safe place to live, that does not limit length of stay (permanent housing), before stabilizing, improving health, reducing harmful behaviors, or increasing income. Under the Housing First approach, anyone experiencing homelessness should be connected to a permanent home as quickly as possible, barriers should be removed to accessing the housing, like requirements for sobriety or absence of criminal history. It is based on the “hierarchy of need:” people must access basic necessities—like a safe place to live and food to eat—before being able to achieve quality of life or pursue personal goals.

Programs that provide funding for Rapid re-housing, which connects a family or individual to an apartment affordable through short to medium-term rental assistance, are typically designed to allow that household to increase their income sufficiently to be able to afford the apartment over the long-term.

It is a common practice in Richmond for landlords to refuse to provide rental housing to previously homeless persons, even if they can pay the rent, based on the lack of full employment documentation, positive references, poor credit history, or previous homelessness.

We must not allow illegal, discriminatory, and overzealous tenant screening to be an impediment for re-housing our homeless population.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Draft Fair Chance Access to Affordable Housing Ordinance language