



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR
February 14, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
Submitted by: Lisa Warhuus, Director, Health, Housing, and Community Services
Subject: Referral Response: Home Share Program

INTRODUCTION

This report responds to a Council referral on home share programs that originated with the Housing Advisory Commission. A home share program pairs individual homeowners who have extra room in their homes with individuals seeking affordable housing in a communal setting. This may also support homeowners with financial need and/or a need for companionship or other support. Home share programs are typically designed to support housing affordability for seniors and to prevent displacement.

Staff researched home share programs to gather information on their scope, staffing, and a potential Berkeley-focused program. Council may consider identifying funds and issuing a Request for Proposals to fund such a program via an existing home share provider. There are existing local home share programs that could scale up operations in Berkeley with additional funding.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

This report responds to referral #000-2822 that originally appeared on the agenda of the October 16, 2018 Council meeting and was sponsored by Igor Tregub, Chairperson of the Housing Advisory Commission.

Home share programs match those seeking affordable housing with those who have extra room in their homes, and need financial support, companionship, task exchanges, or some combination thereof. These programs typically pair older adults (aged 55 and over) with individuals aged 18 and over who are seeking affordable housing in a communal setting. The programs facilitate the match through a “high-touch” screening process for both homeowners and tenants. They also vet homes to ensure the accuracy of listings and facilitate shared living through development of house agreements and regular check-ins. These programs address housing shortages and mitigate isolation and loneliness senior populations are facing. They also increase financial security and help individuals remain at home in their community. These services are offered free of charge to homeowner and tenant participants.

In 2018, the City Council referred to the City Manager the possibility of working with existing similar programs such as Safe Home (Rebuilding Together senior rehabilitation program) and Ashby Village to implement a Home Share Pilot Program.

The nonprofit organization Front Porch is currently implementing home share programs in the East Bay (Contra Costa County and parts of Alameda County), as well as in San Francisco and Marin County (<https://covia.org/programs/home-match/>). Berkeley residents may be able to access the home share programs already operational in Alameda County. Front Porch is connected to local senior-serving organizations such as Ashby Village and Rebuilding Together. There is also a UC-Berkeley Retirement Home Match Program run by the Berkeley Retirement Center that matches retired UC Berkeley faculty and staff who own homes with Berkeley graduate students, post-docs and visiting scholars. This program has not been active since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, but is in conversation with Front Porch about partnering to begin delivering home sharing service to more diverse populations.

There is also existing funding to focus on high-need areas in Berkeley. For example, Front Porch received a grant from the State's CalHome program to provide services in Oakland, San Leandro, Hayward, Fremont, City of Alameda and Treasure Island. This grant includes funding to work with Ashby Village to support home providers in Opportunity Zones, which cover parts of South Berkeley, West Berkeley, and downtown. Outreach to potential home providers in these parts of Berkeley started in late 2022; as of the time of writing this report in December 2022, one match has been made in Berkeley, and Front Porch is currently working with two other home providers to coordinate tenants. Their goal is to facilitate and stabilize four or five home matches per year in Berkeley through this program.

City funding could support a full-time program manager dedicated to Berkeley that would result in increased outreach in Berkeley. Front Porch estimates this can provide and stabilize housing for 35-40 Berkeley residents per year. Additionally, this outreach could be citywide, and not limited to Opportunity Zones, which may result in increased opportunities for lower-income tenants to find housing in higher-resource areas.

BACKGROUND

In 2018, the City began the Age-Friendly Berkeley initiative (<https://www.agefriendlyberkeley.org>), which identified affordable housing and home modifications as priority issues for seniors. Currently, several City programs assist senior homeowners. The Home Modifications for Accessibility and Safety program operated by Rebuilding Together and the Center for Independent Living completes home improvement projects to improve accessibility within the home for seniors and persons with disabilities. Similarly, low- and moderate-income senior households may apply for a zero interest loan for home improvements through the City's Senior and Disabled Home Improvement Loan Program.

There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in Berkeley; in July 2022, more than 21,000 residents applied to get on a Berkeley Housing Authority wait list for Section 8 housing vouchers, with only 2,000 vouchers available. Over half of renter households in Berkeley are rent-burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income to housing expenses. In a 2017 survey of UC Berkeley students, 10 percent identified as having experienced homelessness at some point since arriving at UC Berkeley. Berkeley's senior population, ages 65 to 74, was the fastest growing age group between 2010 and 2019. Senior-headed households comprise nearly 28 percent of all Berkeley households. Of senior households that are owner-occupied, one in four are lower income (80% area median income or lower). Berkeley is in a unique position to benefit from a home share program given its mix of senior homeowners and the UC Berkeley student population.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

If Council chooses to fund a Request for Proposals for a home share program through the budget process, this program may help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with longer commutes by reducing or reversing displacement of those with ties to Berkeley.

Additionally, the Front Porch Home Match program described above is including climate adaptation activities as part of its deliverables in a CalHome award for Alameda County. These activities enhance their existing "home readiness" program and provide environmentally beneficial upgrades to participating homes including providing energy efficient light bulbs to replace incandescent bulbs, window tinting to reduce ambient heat, low-flow showerheads, and helping caulk or foam leaks around windows and change filters on home provider's furnaces.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

If Council chooses to fund a Request for Proposals for home share through the budget process, the City's Health, Housing, and Community Services department could administer the competitive Request for Proposals to fund an existing home share program provider(s). The City's Aging Services may also partner on outreach through their many existing outreach channels with seniors.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

If Council chooses to fund a Request for Proposals for home share through the budget process, home share organizations would supply bids to formalize a local program and do targeted outreach in Berkeley. Home share provider organization staff typically recruit homeowners and tenants, vet and prepare homes, and coordinate ongoing support to ensure successful cohabitation.

For a home share program, it may make sense to explore a cost share with another jurisdiction, and/or with UC-Berkeley, given the potential to assist housing insecure students in finding affordable housing and the existing university efforts on home share

Referral Response: Home Share Program

INFORMATION CALENDAR
February 14, 2023

programming. Depending on whether there is a cost share, staff estimate home share program costs would range from \$50,000 to \$125,000.

CONTACT PERSON

Anna Cash, Community Development Project Coordinator, HHCS, 510 981 5403

Attachments:

- 1: Home Match All Counties Impact Survey 2021
- 2: Original Referral Report from October 16, 2018



Home Match

CREATING COMMUNITY



2021 Contra Costa County Match

Our Impact

2021 Match Survey Highlights

Home Match is a vital housing resource in the Bay Area. Our matches:

- **Save on housing costs;**
- **Feel more connected to their communities;** and
- **Feel more secure in their housing.**

93% of our survey respondents are **satisfied with our service** and **95%** **would recommend us to a friend or relative** – or already have!

About Us

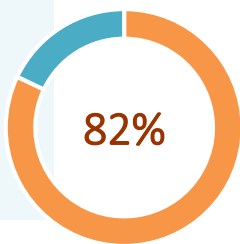
Home Match is a nonprofit home-sharing program that harnesses the strength of community to improve lives.

covia.org/services/home-match

..... TOP 4 REASONS PEOPLE LOVE HOME MATCH

1 Savings & Financial Stability

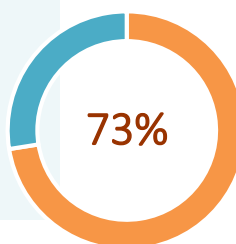
“I needed the financial assistance so my children helped to connect me with Home Match.”



Feel **less worried about money** due to their match, with 81% reporting **monthly savings of \$400 or more.**

2 Safe & Compatible Homemates

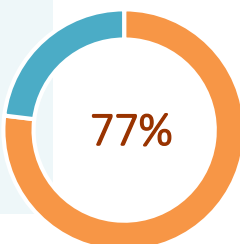
“I wanted to share my home with someone having difficulty finding a place to live in the Bay Area.”



Feel they have **safer and more secure housing**: “I love Home Match because [they] thoroughly vet applicants.”

3 Stable & Secure Housing Options

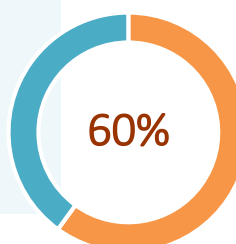
“I had nowhere to go, Home Match helped me find an affordable room for rent with a lovely family.”



Feel **more comfortable in their housing**, with 74% reporting they feel **happier** due to their match.

4 Companionship & Mutual Benefit

“My new home mate has been my friend for years. I was at a transition point and Home Match was a good option.”



Feel **more connected to others**: “We had a spare room, we needed support and we wanted to offer support to another.”



[Commission Name]

ACTION CALENDAR
 October 16, 2018
(Continued from May 29, 2018)

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Housing Advisory Commission
 Submitted by: Igor Tregub, Chairperson, Housing Advisory Commission
 Subject: Home Share Pilot Program Recommendation

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to establish a two-year Home Share Pilot Program that could be expanded into a permanent housing program in the City of Berkeley.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

At this time, the HAC does not know exactly what a program would cost in Berkeley. There are local examples of current programs, for example, in Fremont, the budget is \$75,000. This budget covers the costs of renting out office space and paying staff salaries. Staff would be responsible for conducting interviews, background checks, house screening, as well as follow-up support. Berkeley's RFQ process will be helpful in identifying costs. There is also the possibility of the nonprofit independently funding Home Share services through grant resources, with the City contributing just a portion of the budget, including the donation of office space.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The City of Berkeley is home to a large number of seniors and to a young adult population. According to the 2015-2023 Housing Element, of the 112,580 residents counted by the 2010 Census, 27% were between the ages of 18 and 24, and 23% of the population was over 55 years of age. Students are having a difficult time finding affordable housing while seniors, living on fixed incomes, still need to cover increased costs of utilities for all residents, and continuing costs of property taxes, insurance, and maintenance for homeowners. Home Sharing is a living arrangement in which two or more unrelated people share a house or an apartment. A Home Share Program will benefit both younger and older individuals and households.

The HAC will assist the City in developing an RFQ for this proposed program.

BACKGROUND

The Housing Advisory Commission took the following action at its March 1, 2018 meeting:

Action: M/S/C (Wright/Amezcuca) to adopt the proposed recommendations with amendments as dictated by the Commission.

Vote: Ayes: Amezcua, Johnson, Kesarwani, Owens, Wolfe, and Wright. Noes: Lord. Abstain: None. Absent: Lewis (excused), Tregub (excused).

Home Sharing programs connect homeowners or renters with extra rooms who need assistance to home seekers in need of housing.

To launch a city-sponsored Home Sharing program, it is advantageous to partner with a local nonprofit organization that can help with the vetting and screening process of interested parties. It is essential to have city-backing in order to increase community member trust in the program, and to have a funding model that is not based on charging commissions to home providers or home seekers.

Although there are no age guidelines about who can participate in the Home Share program as a home provider or seeker, most matches are between senior home providers and younger lodgers. In some of these arrangements, reduced rent is given in exchange for the home seeker helping with chores or other household needs. These arrangements may prove advantageous for those who enjoy intergenerational living.

EXAMPLES OF HOME SHARE PROGRAMS

The City of Fremont has officially sponsored a home share program (<https://www.fremont.gov/2375/Home-Sharing-Program>), partnering with the nonprofit organization, HIP Housing (Human Investment Project Housing). Together, they are matching home seekers who currently live, work, or go to school in Fremont, with homeowners or renters with an extra room. (<http://hiphousing.org/programs/home-sharing-program/>).

HIP screens home seekers and home providers at an interview, checking references and income verification. HIP also provides this home matching service in San Mateo County. HIP has operated its San Mateo program for over 30 years. Their program serves as the model for programs in other cities.

In San Francisco, the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development has partnered with Northern California Presbyterian Homes & Service and Episcopal Senior Communities (ESC), to provide a Home Match program. (<http://www.homematchsf.org/>) To take advantage of this free program, home seekers must be 18 years of old or older, earn no more than 90% of the Area Median Income, and undergo a thorough background check. To participate as a home provider, the homeowner must provide proof of home ownership and residence, give a tour of the property during the interview process, and undergo a thorough background check. Both parties must describe their

ideal home arrangement, personal characteristics, meet, and decide if they are a good match to live together. Ninety percent of the San Francisco home share program is funded by the County, and is staffed by a program director and outreach manager.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Recommendations regarding the implementation of a Home Share Pilot Program do not impact the environment directly.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

We need to think of creative ways to help Berkeley residents afford housing and “age in place.” This program would be available both to senior homeowners and senior renters.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) developments are another way to help seniors remain in their housing. However, not all housing is conducive to adding ADUs, and the creation of an ADU requires investment of funds that seniors may not have.

CITY MANAGER

See companion report.

CONTACT PERSON

Amy Davidson, Commission Secretary, Health, Housing & Community Services, (510) 981-5406