



**To:** Honorable City Council  
**From:** John Moreno  
**By:** Kevin M. Chun/Marco Cuevas Jr.  
**Date:** July 17, 2018

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**Subject: Proposed Residential Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Rebate Program**

### **Request**

At the April 3, 2018 City Council meeting, the City Council directed staff to explore the possibility of providing residents with rebates for air purifiers and filters, similar to the new Home Security Rebate Program. The Residential Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Rebate Program is proposed as a new citywide program to assist Paramount residents with obtaining an air purifier filtration unit or HVAC filters for their home. With the attention given to regional air quality issues, this program is intended to help improve air quality in Paramount homes. The program will provide financial assistance through a rebate to residents for the purchase of a room-based air purifier filtration unit or household HVAC filters. For Fiscal Year 2019, the City Council budgeted \$10,000 for the Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Program from the General Fund.

### **Past Research**

As part of the City's continuing efforts to address regional air quality issues, the City Council directed staff at its October 17, 2017 meeting to explore grant funding opportunities that would provide indoor air filtration units for residents. The City retained the services of a Certified Industrial Hygienist with Pacific EH & S Services (Pacific), an environmental, health, and safety consultant that analyzed air quality data in Paramount and provided recommendations regarding the type of filtration equipment most appropriate for reducing levels of unhealthful air. It should be noted that Pacific confirmed the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) sampling analysis findings that there was not a specific hazard identified in the DPH indoor air samples taken in Paramount. The use of air filters and air filtration units was not recommended by Pacific as a necessity; however, such equipment could be used as a matter of personal preference.

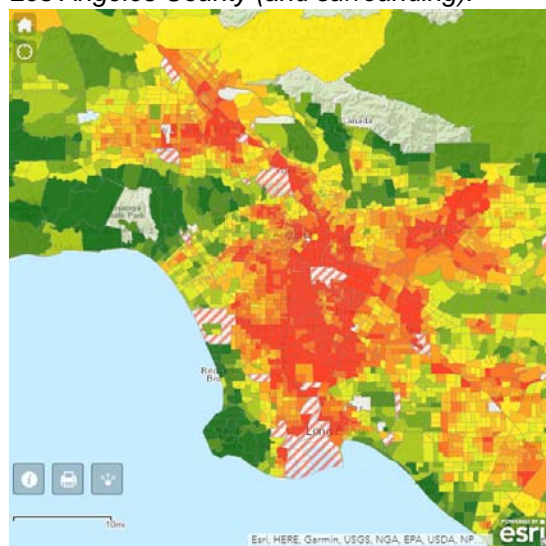
### **Justification**

Although past research determined that indoor air was not a specific community hazard, staff conducted additional research that could justify the use of City funds for air filtration products. In 1999, Governor Gray Davis signed Senate Bill (SB) 115, which formally introduced environmental justice language into State law, and began a process leading to a screening tool to evaluate pollution based on census tracts. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) developed the California

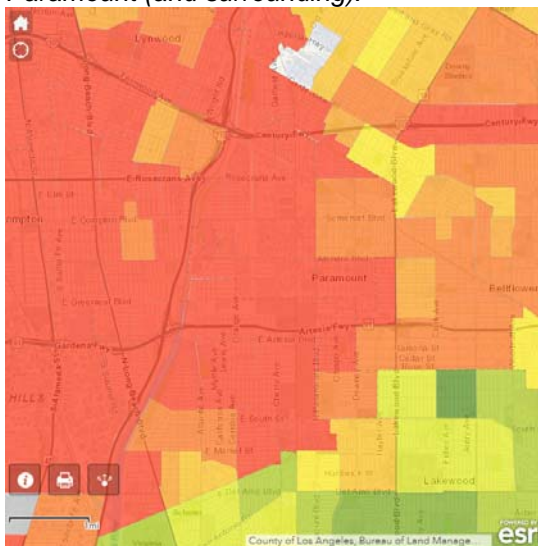
Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen). This tool measures a number of pollution indicators as a means for determining and designating disadvantaged communities throughout California. Higher CalEnviroScreen scoring (81% to 100%) for pollution burden and population characteristics is represented in CalEnviroScreen mapping in darker red colors.

Below are maps from CalEnviroScreen (using data most recently updated in June 2018) focusing on Los Angeles County. The maps show substantial areas designated as disadvantaged communities, including Paramount, which is mostly in the uppermost tier. The CalEnviroScreen, and the indicated pollution levels in Paramount, demonstrate a funding justification to establish a rebate program dedicated to air purifier units and HVAC filters for residents.

Los Angeles County (and surrounding):



Paramount (and surrounding):



A number of air pollutant sources are driving the elevated pollution burden. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated Greater Los Angeles as an extreme nonattainment area for maximum levels of ground-level ozone, the primary component of smog and a harmful trigger of respiratory ailments. A chemical reaction in sunlight, primarily from releases from cars, trucks, buses, and construction equipment, creates ozone. The Los Angeles region is also a nonattainment area for airborne particulate matter such as dirt, dust, and smoke emitted from industry, vehicles, and construction. In 2015, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) completed the Multiple Air Toxics Exposure Study IV (MATES IV), an air monitoring and evaluation study that showed amongst other results the negative impact of diesel particulate matter from freeways, the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and railways.

Similar to other centrally located and highly urbanized cities, Paramount is ringed by freeways with a heavy trucking presence, and the Long Beach Freeway (Interstate 710) along the western boundary of the City carries an increasingly congested diesel truck load commensurate with the growth of oceanic cargo trade through the ports.

## **Types of Filters**

Based on the recommendations provided by Pacific, air filtration units should be equipped with changeable "HEPA" filters, specifically labeled with the recognized standard of "True HEPA". HEPA filters are technically required to capture up to 99.97% of particles of 0.3 microns or larger from the air that passes through the filter. A HEPA filter will filter metal particulates and is the most appropriate type of filter for air contaminants. As an added benefit, these filters if used properly will also filter detectible odors. Household HVAC unit filters are also recommended to be included in this program as they also effectively capture unhealthful air particles. The most effective HVAC air unit filters have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of at least 13 on a scale of 1 to 16.

Additional filtration methods such as carbon or charcoal filtration, ion, ionic, static discharge, sanitizer, deodorizer, germ-eliminator, or UV light should be avoided as they will not increase the function of a unit and will ultimately require more filters and other components to replace. The hygienist from Pacific stated that a HEPA air purifier unit is the most effective way to reduce unhealthful air particles in a home.

## **Proposed Rebate Program**

Room-based air purifier units meeting the performance criteria referenced above can cost between \$150 and \$250 per unit. These units are easily available for purchase online and in many department and hardware stores. Under program guidelines, staff recommends that the City rebate up to \$100 for the cost of a qualifying home air purifier unit of the applicant's choice, or up to \$50 for the purchase of HVAC filters. This would allow for a substantial rebate per residence while at the same time allowing for a larger number of participants.

Staff consulted with the City Attorney and determined that a rebate program would lessen the City's exposure to any potential liability, more so than other forms of assistance programs, such as an air filter giveaway program. An air filter giveaway program could imply that the City is endorsing a specific product that will protect the health of an individual. By offering a rebate, the City is not endorsing any specific brand of filter nor is the City claiming any associated health benefits from the use of an air filter. The rebate program is simply financial assistance given to an individual who has made an independent choice to purchase an air filter.

## **Program Guidelines**

To receive the rebate, applicants must submit an online application with a copy of their receipt for the air purifier unit or HVAC filters within sixty days of the purchase date (one rebate per household on a first-come, first-served basis). Staff will also assist residents without access to an online application. The application process can be summarized in four simple steps:

1. Complete the online application
2. Upload required documentation (picture of receipt)
3. Review by Community Development Department personnel
4. Issue the rebate/reimbursement to the Paramount resident

This process is similar to the Home Security Rebate Program that is very familiar to the City Council. At the end of the fiscal year, staff will evaluate the success of this program and may propose additional funding in next year's budget to extend the program. The City will also continue to seek grant funding to match or supplant the funds for the program.

The following program guidelines are proposed:

- Funding is restricted to City of Paramount residents; staff will verify proof of Paramount residency.
- Funding is for the reimbursement of air purifier filtration units or HVAC filters intended for residential use only.
- A one-time rebate is available per household for either an air purifier unit or HVAC filters. A household refers to the residents as a whole within one permitted housing unit, including a single-family home, a housing unit within a duplex, a housing unit within a multiple-family apartment or condominium complex, an accessory dwelling unit, or a mobile home.
- Third parties are ineligible for rebates.
- Rebates will be issued on a "first-come, first served" basis until funding is exhausted.
- Verified air purifier units or HVAC filter purchases may be from an online retailer or a traditional "brick and mortar" retailer.
- Air purifier units and HVAC filters must be purchased new. Previously used models are unacceptable for rebate.
- Staff will verify purchase of an operational air purifier unit and HVAC filters.
- An air purifier unit must be equipped with changeable "HEPA" filters and specifically labeled with the recognized standard of "True HEPA".
- HVAC air unit filters shall have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of at least 13.
- The City does not recommend or endorse any air purifier filtration unit or HVAC filter, nor does it guarantee or warranty the functions, operation, or effectiveness of an air purifier unit or HVAC filter.
- Carbon filtration, ion, ionic, etc. units are not eligible for the rebate.
- Once an air purifier unit or HVAC filters are purchased, a resident will be required to submit an application with the Community Development Department and include a copy of the receipt or invoice within 60 days of the purchase date, including the 60-day period prior to the City Council approval date of the program.
- If successful and if approved by the City Council, the Residential Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Rebate Program could become an annual program.

## **Outreach**

The City will promote the Residential Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Rebate Program through the City website as a highlighted "story" on the homepage that will link

to the Community Development Department webpage for guidelines, the application, and answers to frequently asked questions. The Community Development Department will promote the program in conjunction with the Home Improvement Program, and staff will conduct direct outreach in the Paramount residential community in the coming months. Other marketing will include social media notifications, handouts at City facilities and events, and information in the email and print versions of the Paramount Around Town and Pulse Beat

### **Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager or designee to implement the Residential Air Purifier Filtration and HVAC Filter Rebate Program as outlined in this report.

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