

City of San Leandro

Housing Protections in San Leandro

Mobile Home Park Owners Focus Group

(October 27, 2023)

Workshop Topline Summary

The impending expiration of the pandemic-related eviction moratorium, which ended in July 2023, enlivened concerns around the rights of both tenants and housing providers. As a result, the San Leandro City Council requested in July 2023 that the City of San Leandro (City) explore additional housing protections. The City is taking a broad view and considering a new rent control ordinance, tenant anti-harassment, rent registry, and just cause. They are also evaluating existing protections such as the Rent Review Board, Tenant Relocation Ordinance, and State AB 1482.

The community has been invited to participate in constructive dialogue on how to tailor protections to be both feasible and effective. Public input will help the City understand the community's priorities and potential areas of common ground. The City will use public engagement findings to guide the development of a new ordinance(s) and/or enhance existing City and State housing protections.

The City hosted a series of focus groups with tenants, housing providers, mobile home park owners, mobile home park residents and their advocates. The focus groups were designed to gather input from diverse groups with a strong interest in housing protections. The mobile home park owners focus group was held on October 27, 2023. Four people participated and represented mobile home park owners, property managers, and advocates. Key themes and sentiments are summarized below. This workshop summary is not intended to be a transcription.

Affordability

Several participants noted that mobile home parks are a key source of affordable housing and expressed a desire for the City to work with park owners collaboratively to support this affordable housing.

Existing Protections

Several participants shared their view that the existing protections offer strong protection for tenants.

One participant expressed that while the park owners were not happy with the 2019 mobile home rent stabilization ordinance, they have learned to live with it and do not want to see additional changes.

Fair Rate of Return

One participant shared that more regulations push landlords "into a corner" so they have no other option but to use the fair rate of return hearing process. Fair rate of return hearings are

expensive and unpredictable and create instability for residents. The participant noted that arbitrators may raise rents too high, which creates added burden for residents.

Misconceptions around Business Model

Some participants shared that tenants do not understand the business model and operating expenses of a mobile home park. Participants noted that many parks are owned by small business owners, not large corporations, and are more vulnerable to changes in the economy.

One participant shared that local governments often do not understand the mobile home industry and suggested that there be training or education available for the City Council.

Maintenance and Services in Mobile Home Parks

Participants expressed a strong desire to create and maintain functioning, safe mobile home parks.

One participant noted that mobile home parks function as “mini cities within a city,” and that park owners are responsible for utilities such as water and electricity.

New Protections

One participant shared that protections were needed for park owners, especially protections from harassment by tenants, citing personal experience with threatening behavior from certain tenants.

One participant said that many tenants had not paid rent for several years and this was causing serious financial strain on the park owner, to the point of the mobile home park owners potentially becoming homeless.

Relationship with Tenants

Participants agreed that they attempt to work with good tenants to retain them and do not want tenants displaced. Participants shared that good tenants contribute to positive park communities.

Several participants shared that it was difficult to enforce community standards because tenants who receive notices of rule violations sometimes say this is harassment. This creates challenges for landlords to uphold community standards and fear of getting in trouble with the City.

Process

One participant expressed disappointment with the focus group design which separated park owners from residents and shared that it would be beneficial to bring the groups together for future conversations.

Unintended Consequences

One participant noted that San Leandro, like many other cities, is interested in supporting diversity, but that additional restrictions on housing providers would have the unintended consequence of limiting affordable housing and make it harder for diverse families to move in. Several raised concerns that additional restrictions or caps on rent increases would cut into park budgets and result in fewer improvements and maintenance.