

City of San Leandro

Housing Protections in San Leandro

Community Meeting 2 (October 25, 2023)

Workshop Topline Summary

The impending expiration of the pandemic-related eviction moratorium, which expired 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 the second of two community meetings on October 25, 2023 in-person at the San Leandro Senior Community Center. Approximately 48 community members attended. Interpretation was available in Mandarin, and Cantonese. The City did not receive any requests for interpretation services prior to the meeting. Participants were asked to weigh in on their vision for housing in a thriving San Leandro, hopes for housing protections, concerns about housing protections, and advice for the City. Key themes and sentiments expressed during the meeting are summarized below. This workshop summary is not intended to be a transcription.

Affordability

- Many participants shared that there is a lack of affordable housing, and that more affordable housing is needed. Others noted that increased housing stock for all incomes levels is needed, including diverse types of housing.
- Several participants raised concerns about affordability for specific groups, which included seniors in retirement, teachers and nurses, and people with disabilities.
- Some participants suggested that additional funds be made available to low-income renters or renters who wish to become home buyers.
- Some participants noted that incomes are not keeping pace with rent increases.
- Several participants noted concern for people experiencing homelessness and the impact of affordability on increasing homelessness.

Communications and Process

- One participant suggested that the term “affordable housing” should be replaced with “tax-payer subsidized housing.”

- Participants requested that the PowerPoint presentation be available in printed format, and shared concerns that the information was not shared in an accessible way.
- Some participants questioned whether this process was necessary and lamented the expense of exploring new ordinances.
- One participant suggested creating a task force to dive deeper into these issues.
- Suggestions for the City on the process included ensuring transparency and accountability, being inclusive, reporting back to the community, and moving quickly.

Existing Protections

- Some participants expressed that existing laws favor landlords, and that protections for tenants are not strong enough. Others disagreed and felt that current laws favor tenants.
- Some participants suggested that improvements are needed to the City's Tenant Relocation Assistance Program.
- A few participants suggested improvements to the City's Rent Review Board, including giving it more "teeth" and creating an appeal process.

Housing Stock

- Some participants suggested creating incentives for housing production, for providing below market rate rentals, and for keeping units on the market. One participant suggested limits for when rental units can come off the market.
- Several participants were concerned that new regulations would decrease housing stock by discouraging development and causing landlords to exit the market. One participant shared that the City should focus resources on new development rather than protections because there are not enough units available.
- Some participants shared that existing affordable housing needs to be protected.
- Participants agreed that housing should be high-quality and well maintained.

"Mom and Pop" Landlords

- "Mom and Pop" landlords were mentioned many times. Some participants shared that "Mom and Pop" landlords need protections and should not be lumped in with corporations. Others expressed skepticism about the true definition of "Mom and Pop" landlords and encouraged the City to define the term clearly.
- Some participants shared significant challenges that they had faced as landlords. Examples included tenants not paying rent or forging rent receipts and experiencing property damage.
- Some participants mentioned the impact that the eviction moratorium had on housing providers and significant back rent that remains unpaid.
- Some participants raised the issue of rising costs for landlords for things like insurance, maintenance, and inflation, and shared that landlords need to be able to raise rents to keep up.
- A few participants raised an issue of inequity between small "Mom and Pop" housing providers and large corporations and expressed a desire for protections for small providers.

New Protections

- Some participants expressed support for new protections, including rent stabilization, tenant anti-harassment, and just cause. Others expressed opposition to new protections.
- Representatives from the group San Leandro HOPE shared that they had developed a draft text for an ordinance and encouraged people to use that as a starting point.
- Some participants raised concerns that just cause protections can prevent “bad actors” from leaving, and pointed out that bad actor tenants create problems for other tenants. Others expressed concern that it would prevent family members from moving into ADU or in-law units.
- Several participants suggested that rent increases should not be able to rise more than inflation.
- Some participants expressed concerns about a rent registry in regards to privacy of personal information and displacing people from unpermitted units.
- Some participants shared that tenants need protection from landlords passing along the cost of improvements to the unit, or from landlords raising the rent when improvements are requested. Some participants also noted that fees should be monitored more closely in addition to rents.
- Some participants suggested that rent control should be means-tested.

Under New Ownership

- Several participants raised the issue of new owners increasing rents and fees, which impacted affordability. Others expressed wanting to see “legacy” housing providers protected and supported.