

# **City of San Leandro**

## **Housing Protections in San Leandro**

### **Landlord/Housing Providers Focus Group**

#### **(October 20, 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 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 different groups with a strong interest in housing protections. The landlord/housing providers focus group was held on October 20, 2023. Fourteen people participated and represented housing providers and housing provider advocates. Key themes and sentiments are summarized below. This workshop summary is not intended to be a transcription.

### **Data**

- The theme of data was raised several times. Participants requested that the City carefully review data on the results of housing protections and unintended consequences in other nearby cities. Several articles were provided to the City for reference.
- Participants expressed concern that the City may be swayed by a handful of vocal complaints, rather than data and requested that the City examine local data on complaints or issues including those related to housing conditions, rent increases, and evictions.

### **Education**

- Participants expressed enthusiasm for additional education on current laws for both tenants and housing providers. Participants shared that most people do not understand the Renter Protection Act, AB 1482, and if tenants understood the protections they already have, it would not be necessary to add more.

- Another participant expressed that there needs to be education for politicians on the economic realities of landlords/housing providers.

## Evictions

- Participants shared that there is not a big eviction problem in San Leandro and that most evictions are due to non-payment of rent. Participants shared that landlords do not want to evict and would prefer to work with tenants to find a “win-win” solution to issues.

## Existing Protections

- Participants shared that housing protections are already in place and expressed strong disagreement with the characterization of “some protections” in the presentation.
- Participants expressed a desire to allow the current system to work rather than introducing new protections, citing existing State law AB 1482, described by one participant as a “grand compromise,” and the City Rent Review Board.
- Participants noted that the Bay Area saw a recent decrease in rents and additional protections are not needed.
- Several participants shared that the eviction moratorium hurt many landlords financially and stated that the City needs to reimburse housing providers’ losses due to the moratorium.

## Financial Assistance to Renters

- Participants suggested that more financial assistance be made available to low-income renters through Section 8 or downpayment assistance.

## Housing Stock

- Participants expressed that the focus should be on increasing housing stock, rather than new protections.

## New Protections

- Participants expressed the need for more protections for housing providers, not tenants. Examples included “Mom and Pop” landlords needing legal aid, especially for unpaid rent cases; housing providers needing protection from false accusations and unfounded “witch hunts;” and landlords needing protection from threats or harassment by their tenants.
- Regarding new protections for tenants, a participant raised the issue of means-testing and questioned if someone earning above median income in the Bay Area should receive rent stabilization.
- Participants shared that any additional fees on housing providers to support a new ordinance would not be welcome, with one participant describing it as a “non-starter.”

## Process and Communication

- One participant suggested that if a survey is issued, it should be reviewed by the landlord/housing provider and tenant advocacy community to remove any bias from questions.
- One participant expressed dissatisfaction with the process and the City’s approach, sharing that it felt as though housing providers were “guilty until proven innocent.”

- Another expressed appreciation for arranging the conversation.

### **Unintended Consequences**

- Participants shared that a strict rent control policy will result in unintended consequences, including rent increases by landlords fearful of new restrictions, decreased development, benefits only for people who are already renting, and decrease in housing stock due to providers selling and exiting the market. Examples from San Francisco and Berkeley were shared.

### **Voice in Public Process**

- Participants expressed concerns that housing providers' voices cannot be heard and that renters are listened to more. There was also a concern about a language barrier for housing providers to participate fully.