



January 7, 2023

Dear Mayor Rowse and City Council Members,

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara (LWVSB), we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the City's final draft amendments to its existing "Just Cause Eviction" and tenant protection ordinances. We fully support these proposed amendments and applaud the City's efforts to pursue stronger protections for tenants, as allowed by new State law (SB 567).

Providing tenants these types of legal protections help to mitigate our affordable housing crisis in two important ways: 1) they ensure that our most vulnerable households and lower income workforce can remain in naturally-occurring affordable homes and, 2) they ensure that [our region's dwindling supply of naturally-occurring affordable housing](#) is not purchased solely for the purpose of being converted into expensive and highly-profitable market rate housing (California Housing Partnership, 2023).

In particular, we support the City's additional section that allows for a tenant's right of first refusal to re-rent after a no-fault just cause eviction. This new ordinance would allow a tenant to return to their home after a substantial remodel at a rental price that is close to what they paid previously. Such a provision is vital because it minimizes tenant instability and allows our essential workers to continue to live in the community in which they work.

We want to remind the Council and the City that the effectiveness of such tenant protections will ultimately rely on rigorous enforcement and adequate funding to carry out such enforcement. In addition, lower-income tenants who hire private lawyers to represent them also need funding. Therefore, we encourage the City to swiftly implement the tenants' legal aid pilot program it authorized nearly a year ago with a \$250,000 allocation from the City budget's surplus.

Finally, the LWVSB urges property owners and tenants to communicate and resolve their issues amicably through mediation and settle disputes whenever possible. If such efforts fail, we believe that these proposed tenant protections could help avoid unjust evictions. We also acknowledge that there are many responsible property owners in our community who strive to keep their property maintained to code and may need to make capital improvements that require tenant relocation. We do not believe these proposed ordinances prevent property owners from taking such

actions. Instead, these proposed ordinances simply aim to strengthen tenants' rights to return after a substantial remodel, specify conditions of their relocation and deter tenant evictions that are carried-out in bad faith.

We commend the City Attorney's office for drafting ordinances that move us one significant step closer to striking a fair balance between upholding tenants and landlords rights and concur with the City staff's recommendation to adopt the ordinances as drafted.

Sincerely,



Vicki Allen  
Vice President of Communications &  
Leadership Team



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