

President's Message



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On January 13, 2026, the Santa Barbara City Council considered two ordinances. One was a temporary moratorium on rent increases lasting up to December 31, 2026 while the City staff prepared a rent Stabilization Board or program. This procedure is estimated to take approximately until July but could take as long as to December. The measure failed to receive the 5 votes needed for it to be enacted immediately as an emergency measure.

It did however receive the 4 votes needed to move forward to be heard again on a regular City Council calendar; and, then if approved to become effective 30 days after that. The City Council meeting that was to be held today, January 20th, was canceled and I anticipate that this will be on the City Council agenda next week.

Any rent increases served before the measure becomes effective will count against any allowable rent increases in the future. The majority of the City Council want the effective date to be retroactive to the first City Council consideration of the matter on October 15, 2025.

Additionally, the City Council considered an amendment to Municipal Code section 26.50.100 governing the use of the just cause of taking a rental property off the market as the reason for the termination of a tenancy. That "just cause" already requires an owner to register with the Planning Department taking the property off the market. The amendment would add that it cannot be put back on the market for 5 years.

No consideration is being given to Owners' increased cost of insurance, maintenance of their property and other increases in costs that do not stop while this proposed rent freeze is going on.

It may well be that with these onerous rent limitations, it will be more cost effective to keep a property off the market for 5 years if it can then be rented at market rates again. But that certainly does nothing to increase the number of available rental units in the city. To the contrary, more and

more units are being lost due to overregulation and owners selling their properties.

Looking at it from the flip side, this proposed amendment is forcing owners to stay in business and an impossibly reduced rent. And, the 5 years that the property must stay out of the rental market runs with the land. So, even if the Owner sells, the 5 years or any remainder at the time of sale will be enforced against the new owner.

No-one has done more to reduce the number of rental units in the City of Santa Barbara than this City Council.

Since the enactment of the so-called tenant protection ordinances, rents have increased; the number of available rental units have decreased; and Owners and Renters have become mortal enemies.

Where is the "fair rate of return?"

Where are the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of Equal Protection. Due Process and the prohibition against government interference with private contracts found in the Contracts Clause?

These "overreaches" by the City officials are punishing those Owners who intentionally have been keeping their rents low and whose rents will now be capped based on those artificially low rents.

3 of the 7 City Council members are Renters who will be directly benefitted by their votes to limit or



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freeze rents. Yet, they are not recusing themselves from voting.

Mom and Pop Owners will become a thing of the past and special consideration cannot be given to anyone. CalRHA and NAA have taken surveys of their members who own 4 or fewer units and two out of every three say they will go out of business within the next 24 months.

The City Council should stop punishing the Housing Industry by putting the entire burden of the housing shortage on the housing providers. Start a rent subsidy program. Find innovative ways to help Renters to become owners. And, only go after Owners who violate the law not the Owners trying their best to navigate these very complicated laws and still make a rate of return sufficient to stay in the industry and PROVIDE HOUSING. (Emphasis intentional.)

Thank you for your membership in SBRPA. Make your voices heard.

Happy New Year.

Betty



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