



Recommendations for Tenant Protections for the City of Bell Gardens (Updated 2.17.21)

Adopt a Permanent Rent Stabilization Ordinance

- Limit annual rent increases to once per year and to 50% CPI to track inflation, with a floor of 0% and a ceiling of 3%.
- Cover all legally allowable units, including apartments, townhouses, duplexes, two or more single family homes on the same lot, rooms in hotels, motels, rooming houses or boarding houses occupied by the same tenant for 30 or more days, residential units attached to a commercial building, mobile homes and recreational vehicles.
- Create a Rent Board to implement the ordinance and announce annual allowable rent increases. This Rent Board should consist of five members and must be representative of the city's demographics along the lines of gender, race, immigration status, income, tenant-to-landlord ratio, and spoken language. Rent Board officials should serve for at least 2 year terms and be able to run for re-election. Responsibilities would include disseminating Know Your Rights materials in the languages commonly spoken by tenants and require landlords to provide these materials at lease-up, when issuing a rent increase, and if issuing a notice of eviction.
- Prohibit rent increases if the Landlord has failed to substantially comply with all provisions of the ordinance; to maintain the Rental Unit in compliance with California Civil Code Sections 1941.1 et seq. and California Health and Safety Code Sections 17920.3 and 17920.10; or failed to make repairs ordered by an Officer of the Court, the Rent Board or the City of Bell Gardens.
- *Explore all possible options for protecting tenants in single family homes and other units ineligible for rent stabilization, including an economic displacement assistance policy, which would allow tenants to request relocation assistance instead of accepting a significant rent increase.

Adopt a Permanent Just Cause Eviction Ordinance

- Limit allowable "at-fault" evictions to the following grounds
 - Failure to pay rent within three days of receiving written notice from the landlord demanding payment
 - Material breach of rental agreement (if a tenant has not fixed the problem within 10 days of receiving notice from the landlord)
 - Failure to provide landlord reasonable access to the rental unit
 - Creating a *substantial* nuisance or using the rental unit for illegal purposes
 - Failure to move out of the rental unit as required by an approved relocation application
 - Household is above income limits in government regulated units
- Limit allowable no-fault evictions to only those required by state law.

- ❑ Provide relocation assistance to tenants evicted on “no-fault” grounds at same or comparable rates provided by the LA Rent Stabilization Ordinance and Just Cause protections. Should consider a slightly reduced relocation assistance fee for “Small Landlords” (defined as those owning 3 units or less).
- ❑ Ensure that tenants living in a unit that is foreclosed on or has a change of ownership are still protected under just cause eviction protections.
- ❑ Prevent no-fault evictions for households with school-aged children or school staff during the school year.
- ❑ Allow tenants evicted through the Ellis Act a “right to return” if their unit is re-rented and minimize loss of rent stabilized units to the full extent allowed under state law.
- ❑ Require that all eviction notices be served on the City as well, and failure to do so is a defense to Unlawful Detainer (eviction).
- ❑ Ensure tenants in illegal or unregistered units, such as converted garages, are afforded the same rights and protections of this ordinance, including a right to relocation assistance should they be forced to move due to a no-fault eviction.

Enact complementary tenant protection policies that will strengthen the permanent rent stabilization and just cause eviction protections.

- ❑ Create a rental registry and require that all rental units be registered with the City.
- ❑ Fund a robust, proactive code enforcement program to address habitability issues that includes regular inspections of all registered units.
- ❑ Fund assistance programs for low-income landlords to make necessary repairs.
- ❑ Guarantee a funded right to counsel for tenants, including pre-eviction services and rental assistance to tenants at risk of eviction.
- ❑ Regulate condominium conversions and demolitions in order to close loopholes that allow the removal of rental housing from the market
- ❑ Require owners of substandard units to complete a Property Management Program.
- ❑ Create something akin to the REAP program in the City of LA which imposes fines and requires completion of a property management program for Landlords who are not in compliance with this ordinance and health and safety codes. In cases where Landlords continue to refuse to comply, tenants’ rent could be reduced by up to 50% and the remaining rent put into an escrow account until the Landlord complies.
- ❑ Include fines for retaliation against tenants asserting or exercising their rights under this ordinance or under state or federal law.
- ❑ Include fines for landlords who threaten tenants based on documentation status.
- ❑ Incorporate special protection provisions for elderly, disabled, school-aged children, and terminally ill tenants.

Finance the administration of these tenant protection policies with a modest fee per unit paid by landlords. If possible, consider partnering with LA County Department of Consumer Business Affairs to offset costs or partially subsidizing these costs with an expenditure from the city or county.