



"Great Apartments Start Here!"

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Via Electronic Mail

Hon. Mayor John C. Zaragoza, and
Members of the Oxnard City Council
Council Chambers
305 West Third Street
Oxnard, California 93030

Re: A Review of Rent Control and Tenant Protection Strategies (Agenda Item N.3)

Dear Hon. Mayor Zaragoza and Members of the City Council;

At the October 19th City Council meeting, City staff will present a review of potential rent control and tenant protection strategies and seek further direction, as needed. The core issues relate to housing affordability, substandard housing conditions, and lack of awareness and/or utilization of existing state laws and local regulations. The Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles' (AAGLA or Association) strongly opposes any form of rent control and rent regulations and urges the Council to further assess the scope of the issues identified, seek targeted solutions and strategies that foster rather than hinder the availability of affordable housing, encourage further housing production, and enhance the City's community education and outreach efforts on existing laws, programs, and resources.

AAGLA, established in 1917, is a non-profit association consisting of rental housing providers and residential management professionals throughout the Southern California region. Today, our association has grown to assist more than 10,000 members, each of whom own or manage over 185,000 rental units throughout our territory in Ventura, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino Counties.

AAGLA represents thousands of small business rental housing providers, including small business, "mom and pop" owners within the City of Oxnard. Many of our members are retired seniors that worked regular "9-5" jobs for decades, scrimping and saving to afford their small investment in rental property that secures and supplements their retirement, medical and other costs of living, and at the same time provides affordable housing to the members of their community, or in some cases, themselves. Our members chose to make an investment in their community, to house themselves and others and as a means to provide financial security during their retirement years.

Due to the COVID-19 unprecedented pandemic and related government mandates, many small business housing providers have gone for over 19 months receiving little, if any rent, and are depleting

their savings to cover a myriad of living and building operating expenses, with some now contemplating selling their property and others now facing foreclosure. The loss of these small business rental housing providers will further reduce the City’s existing, limited affordable housing. We urge the City Council to understand the current dynamics and review existing state law protections and currently available programs.

On January 1, 2020, the State’s comprehensive rent control and renter protection law, Assembly Bill 1482 “The Tenant Protection Act of 2019,” went into effect. This statewide rent control law provides significant protections to renters in the City of Oxnard and throughout the state of California, including placing limitations on annual rent increases, institutes “Just Cause” eviction requirements, and requires relocation fees for no-fault tenancy terminations. This State law was the result of extensive negotiations and input from key stakeholders, including both housing providers and renter groups. Shortly after it went into effect, in March 2020, numerous emergency measures and eviction prohibitions were established and as a result Assembly Bill 1482’s full implementation was not realized. It is only now, that the provisions of the State Law will be fully effectuated. Accordingly, we urge the City Council to allow for the State law to be in place for an adequate amount of time in order to properly evaluate the overall impact and effectiveness of the State law within the city of Oxnard and only then ascertain, what if any, additional local action is needed.

At this juncture, as indicated in the Staff report, “the first problem with AB 1482 is that people are not aware of it.” Adopting additional local rent control measures will not increase awareness and will likely create greater confusion. We recommend that the City institute a robust educational campaign to ensure that Oxnard renters and rental housing providers are knowledgeable of their rights and responsibilities under Assembly Bill 1482, other existing renter protection laws and related available resources. This is a solution that has stakeholder consensus and is recommended by City Staff. Such a campaign is a cost-effective targeted solution that addresses the issue identified and can have an immediate and beneficial impact on the residents of Oxnard in bringing awareness of key existing state laws, local ordinances, renter protections and available assistance programs such as the COVID-19 Rent Relief program. It is through such awareness that individuals are empowered to take steps to utilize the protections afforded by the law. The campaign can include having City staff conduct webinars and workshops and use of existing City resources such as the City’s website and utility bill mailers to promote events, provide information on existing laws and updates on law changes, assistance programs and community resources.

The issue of housing affordability is a complex issue, however what is clear is that a local rent control ordinance is not the solution to the affordability gap. Rent control measures never equate to housing affordability and implementation will not result in the construction of a single new rental housing unit in Oxnard. Over the long-term, rent control only exacerbates housing shortages, housing quality declines, and rental prices increase due to the lack of available units on the market. Rent control will decrease the quantity and quality of affordable rental housing in the City and will only discourage development of new rental units. This is recognized throughout the City’s September 14th Staff report and is exemplified by the Santa Monica case study presented, local rent control has not resulted in housing affordability. Further, the Staff report asserts “as evident in cities with rent control ordinances, such as Santa Monica, **rent control have failed to provide affordable housing** for the majority of renters living in rent-controlled units, while creating negative, unintended consequences including **Ellis Act withdrawals, which in turn lowers the overall number of units available for rent and drives the cost up for the rental units that**

remain." Rent control measures provide a benefit to a small number of individuals who are encouraged to remain in their lower-cost apartments even when their financial earnings significantly increase, at the expense of lower-income residents in need of affordable housing who must now move elsewhere. Absent such measures they would have moved to more expensive housing or purchased a home of their own, making those lower-cost units available to individuals in actual financial need.

With regard to the substandard housing condition concerns, the City's Safe Homes, Safe Families Repeat Offender Program was specifically designed to address properties subject to repeated health and safety violations. It is our understanding that the pandemic directly impacted implementation as code enforcement were not entering residences. We recommend that the City look towards fully instituting this program and publicizing it to Oxnard residents. Moreover, to alleviate noted concerns, the City should inform residents of the ability to submit complaints anonymously and the fact that State Law already provides significant protections to renters against retaliatory action taken following such reporting.

Resolving the issues associated with Oxnard's affordable housing shortage are best accomplished by utilizing and expanding upon the City's housing policies, including as recommended by City Staff, increasing use of density bonuses to incentivize affordable housing development and enforcement of existing inclusionary housing requirements. We also encourage the City Council to consider establishing an emergency rental voucher program with supportive services to subsidize rents for those in financial need and a voluntary mediation program to provide a safe environment, without court or law enforcement involvement, in which to facilitate communication and the opportunity for amicable resolution of disputes and misunderstandings between renters and rental housing providers.

AAGLA appreciates the discussions with City Staff, the City Council, and involved stakeholders on these important housing issues and welcomes the opportunity to continue this important dialogue towards the advancement of targeted solutions that directly benefit Oxnard residents in need. Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters. If you have any questions, please call me at (213) 384-4131; Ext. 309 or contact me via electronic mail at danielle@agla.org.

Very truly yours,

Danielle Leidner-Peretz

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