



Long Beach Housing Justice Coalition

September 14, 2021

Patrick Ure, Bureau Manager
Housing and Neighborhood Services Bureau
Long Beach Development Services
Sent via Electronic Mail

Re: Substantial Remodel Evictions & Renovation Administration Program

Dear Mr. Ure,

The Housing Justice Coalition (HJC) is a collaborative group comprised of non-profit organizations, community groups and individuals with a mission to build community power by supporting tenant-led movements, passing policies that protect tenants, advancing equitable development that serves the community, and increasing community ownership of land. We appreciate being included in the City-hosted stakeholder meetings regarding removing substantial remodel as a just cause reason for eviction from Long Beach Municipal Code and replacing it with a structure for tenants and landlords to work together to ensure safe and affordable housing in Long Beach. After the City-hosted meeting on August 25, HJC gathered to consolidate requests for the program itself, for future presentations to the community and City Council, and for the upcoming combined stakeholder meeting on September 22. This letter provides additional input and requests regarding the City's plan for removing substantial remodel evictions and creating a renovation administration program.

I. HJC Supports Potential Solution 1: Removing Substantial Remodel Evictions and Creating a Renovation Administration Program

As mentioned in the August 25 meeting by city staff and advocates, over 61% of Long Beach households rent their homes and over 82% of housing in Long Beach is over 40 years old. These statistics show the vital need for a program to prevent the loss of affordable housing and establish a system for safe and healthy units. These needs are also recognized in the City's draft Housing Element as essential to meeting Long Beach's housing goals and obligations. In the August 25 meeting, city staff provided three options for stakeholders to consider regarding substantial remodel evictions. **It is HJC's position that the first option is the only option that ensures safe and affordable housing, eliminating the substantial remodel eviction and providing a system for repairs on the city's aging housing stock.**

The substantial remodel eviction as a just cause reason in the state and Long Beach tenant protection laws allow for landlords to evict tenants based solely on remodeling a unit. Once the tenants are removed, the once affordable unit can be brought to market rate rent, thus losing critical affordable housing in the city. In the August 24, 2021, memorandum from the city manager to the Mayor and City Council, city staff stated, "Substantial remodel evictions are a

serious issue that can detrimentally impact the lives of renters in the City and should be addressed.”

1. Investment in Affordable Housing

During the August 25 meeting, city staff reported that the initial costs to create a Renovation Administration Program (RAP) was about \$2 million. However, the program would charge fees on rental units moving forward essentially creating a revenue-neutral program. Investing in the RAP now would save possibly hundreds of affordable housing units from being brought to market rate rents. As the City is currently looking to increase affordable housing and investing in no-net-loss and affordable housing preservation policies, the RAP program would support these goals. It would maintain the current affordable housing stock while providing a system for tenants and landlords to work together to ensure that the housing is safe. Keeping these current housing units affordable helps the City reach its regional housing need allocation, thus preventing the potential loss in millions in grants from the state and federal government.

2. The Alternate Potential Solutions 2 & 3 Proposed Do Not Meet the Goal of Protecting Safe and Affordable Housing

The city presented two alternate potential solutions regarding substantial remodel evictions during the presentation on August 25. As confirmed by the city attorney in attendance, neither of these options eliminate substantial remodel evictions from Long Beach. The result of these proposals is placing a higher price (although not much higher) on substantial remodel evictions, which still allow for landlords to evict tenants solely for the purpose to remodel a unit. Neither option accomplishes the goal of maintaining safe and affordable housing in the city. They simply let a property owner pay their way out of maintaining safe and healthy housing for current residents. Therefore, HJC does not support the adoption of either option 2 or 3. Eliminating substantial remodel evictions is the only way to ensure preservation of affordable housing.

II. Model RAP after the City of Los Angeles’s Tenant Habitability Program

HJC supports a city program that would remove substantial remodel evictions; require landlords to submit a plan with clear descriptions of scope of renovation work, the potential impact of the project and why temporary relocation for tenants is required for any major renovation project; create a city division to assist with preparation of, evaluation, and approval of those plans; require landlords to provide tenants with either temporary, alternate and comparable housing or temporary relocation assistance; and allow lack of approved plan as an affirmative defense in any eviction lawsuit.

The City of Los Angeles provides a great model for reaching all of these goals: the Tenant Habitability Program (THP). The THP is clear for both landlords and tenants to understand the process. HJC supports a RAP modeled after the Los Angeles THP. While some details of the THP are not applicable because Long Beach does not have a rent stabilization ordinance, the structure of the program accomplishes the goals listed above.

III. Eliminate Potential Bias in Potential Solution Presentations

During the presentation at the August 25 meeting, the City did not provide a balanced approach in presenting the three potential solutions proposed. The only potential solution that showed consequences was option 1, which was the only option that would meet the City’s goal of eliminating substantial remodel evictions from the ordinance. This presentation potentially creates a bias towards the alternate options 2 & 3, which did not have any negative consequences listed.

As mentioned above, there are multiple consequences associated with options 2 & 3: (1) they do not eliminate substantial remodel evictions, which the City has noted itself can detrimentally impact the lives of renters, and would not be in the best interest of over 61 percent of the city population, who are renters; and (2) losing affordable units to substantial remodel evictions could potentially cost the City millions in grants by eliminating affordable housing units and thus not meeting the City's state and federal requirements for affordable housing.

HJC requests a more balanced approach to presenting the three options by providing information on potential cons for the alternate options 2 & 3 when presenting to the Mayor, City Council and the public.

IV. Create Space in Final Stakeholder Meeting to Discuss RAP Policies

Finally, HJC requests space in the final stakeholder meeting to discuss RAP policies and procedures in potential solution option 1. During the first stakeholder meeting, the three options were presented to the attendees and much of the meeting was digesting the options as a whole, rather than having the ability to provide input for policies within the options.

We look forward to the meeting on September 22, 2021. Thank you again for inviting us to these meetings. If you have questions, you can speak with anyone from our coalition. We would be happy to schedule a time to discuss this further. Melody Osuna from the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles can be reached at (213) 640-3935 or meosuna@lafla.org.

Sincerely,

Housing Justice Coalition

Abraham Zavala, Long Beach Residents Empowered (LiBRE)
Andrew Mandujano, Long Beach Tenants Union
Victor Sanchez, Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community
Elsa Tung, Long Beach Forward
Myron Wollin, Long Beach Gray Panthers
Susana Sngiem, United Cambodian Community
Jan Victor Andasan, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
Gary Hytrek, California Faculty Association Long Beach Chapter
Melody Osuna, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA)
Wayne Marchyshyn, Veterans For Peace Chapter 110
Kayte Deioma, Independent Tenant Activist and Tenant

CC:

Christopher Koontz, Long Beach Development Services
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