

Berkeley Tenants Union

2022 Blake Street, Berkeley, CA 94704 | berkeleytenants.org | (510) 982-6696



Hello BTU Members and Friends,

This year is proving to be a decisive year for tenant and housing rights. With the housing crisis at the forefront of Berkeley issues, many proposals are being introduced on how to deal with it. Below you will find information on some of these efforts. There are also several important events coming up over the next few weeks, including a pivotal Council meeting on housing and the 2016 Berkeley Tenants Convention. If we are to make an impact on this crisis, we need your support. We must not be silent and allow the housing market to continue spiraling out of control. Be sure to check out the events at the end of this newsletter on how you can make an impact.

Housing Trust Fund

As this city faces a major housing crisis, on March 8th, after months of delay, the Berkeley City Council voted against a couple of simple and effective proposals to increase funding to the heavily depleted Housing Trust Fund (HTF). One proposal by Councilmember Arreguin would have allocated 25% of revenue from the Property Transfer Tax above \$10.5 million to the HTF. Given the amount of revenue being received from the hot housing market, this would not have any negative effects on other funds while ensuring that excess profits from expensive homes goes towards affordable housing. The vote to approve this failed as Councilmembers Maio, Moore, Wengraf and Droste abstained, and Mayor Bates and Councilmember Capitelli voting no on funding affordable housing. Additionally, a proposal by Councilmembers Anderson, Arreguin, and Worthington to loan the HTF \$1 million failed with all the above Councilmembers abstaining and the Mayor voting no, despite voting yes on similar proposals in previous years before the housing crisis exploded.

It is very unfortunate that when people all across this city are struggling to pay rent and find affordable housing, the Berkeley City Council would turn their backs on solutions to increase the amount of affordable housing. In order for proposed affordable housing projects to go forward, we need an estimated \$18.6 - \$38.6 million in the HTF by 2018. Currently, there is less than \$1.2 million in the fund, and these votes will make it very difficult to provide funding, meaning these projects are in jeopardy of not going forward, therefore exacerbating the housing crisis. We will continue to advocate for common sense solutions to improve the ability for such projects to be realized.

Tenant Protection Ordinance

At the March 10th 4x4 Committee of the City Council and Rent Board, discussion was held on creating a Tenant Protection Ordinance. Other cities such as San Francisco, Santa Monica, and Oakland, have created a tenant harassment policy, but Berkeley currently has little remedies to deal with tenant harassment by a landlord or property owner. Because of the housing market, there has been an increase in reports of harassment from property owners, as there is an incentive for them to force long-term tenants out to increase rents.

Berkeley Tenants Union

2022 Blake Street, Berkeley, CA 94704 | berkeleytenants.org | (510) 982-6696



A Tenant Protection Ordinance will allow for tenants in all units (rent-controlled or not) the ability to file for injunctive relief and private right of action without fear of retaliation. This proposal will be coming to Council later in April.

Tenant Buyout Ordinance

On March 15th, the Berkeley City Council voted to adopt a Tenant Buyout Ordinance. This creates regulations that will protect tenants from landlords who act in bad faith. Currently, landlords can give a tenant a monetary sum in exchange for their moving out. Because this is unregulated, some landlords apply pressure and intimidation to get them to move out, allowing them to raise rents even more. This proposal makes sure landlords provide a written notice documenting that a tenant has the right not to enter the agreement, the right to consult an attorney and/or the Rent Board, and the right to cancel the agreement up to 30 days after signing it.

SB 1053

On a statewide level, State Senator Mark Leno recently introduced SB 1053, a bill that will provide low-income and homeless people protections when applying for housing. Landlords would not be able to deny someone an application or evict someone based on whether or not they receive Section 8 or other housing subsidy vouchers. Too often, especially here in Alameda County, we see property owners reject housing applications from Section 8 applicants. Providing voucher holders an equal opportunity to housing is an important aspect of addressing the housing crisis. Earlier this week, the BTU Steering Committee voted to endorse this bill. Be sure to [sign the petition](#) in support of SB 1053.

Save The Dates!

General BTU Meeting

Wednesday, March 30th, 5:30pm-7pm

Grassroots House, 2022 Blake St

Join us for our first general meeting this year. We will be providing you updates on various housing and tenant issues happening in Berkeley. Guest speakers include Councilmember and mayoral candidate Jesse Arreguin, and Planning Commissioner and District 3 candidate Ben Bartlett. Potluck begins at 5:30, with the program starting at 6pm. For more information, go to our [Facebook event](#).

Council Meeting on Affordable Housing

Tuesday, April 5th, 7pm-11pm

BUSD Board Room, 1231 Addison St

Berkeley Tenants Union

2022 Blake Street, Berkeley, CA 94704 | berkeleytenants.org | (510) 982-6696



Continues...

Council Meeting on Affordable Housing
Tuesday, April 5th, 7pm-11pm
BUSD Board Room, 1231 Addison St

The Berkeley City Council will be discussing multiple items aimed at addressing the affordable housing crisis. Here are several topics that will be discussed at that meeting.

- Revising the Affordable Housing Mitigation Fee
- Expanding Inclusionary Unit Definitions
- Eminent Domain
- Mayor's Housing Plan

The Mayor's Housing plan is a laundry list of ideas that we are still analyzing, as it was just released. We need to mobilize at this meeting to make sure Council makes the right decisions in creating affordable housing. We will keep you updated as the date gets closer on what you can do to help make sure tenant voices are heard. You can read the entire [agenda here](#).

Berkeley Tenant Convention
Sunday, April 24th, 1:30pm-5pm
South Berkeley Senior Center, 2119 Ellis St

The biennial tradition continues. Join Berkeley tenants, activists, and progressives in voting for a slate for the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board. All Berkeley residents are welcome to participate. There is a suggested \$10 donation at the door to help cover the cost of the convention. If you are interested in running or would like to get involved, contact berkeleytenantconvention@gmail.com. For more information, visit the [Tenant Convention website](#) and the [Facebook event](#).