



August 2, 2022

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Larkspur City Council

400 Magnolia Ave.

Larkspur, CA 94939

RE: Rent Stabilization

The Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative (MEHC) is a multi-disciplinary consortium of advocates generating support for projects and policies that advance affordable housing, environmental integrity, and social justice.

We write today to support the Skylark Apartment residents in their request that the City of Larkspur *seriously* consider rent stabilization and expanded renter protections. MEHC believes that the most environmentally friendly way to provide affordable housing is to keep existing tenants in their homes.

As you know, 48.6% of Larkspur households are renter households. Almost half of all Larkspur renters are rent-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income towards housing) and a full quarter are paying 50% or more of their income towards housing. This is particularly true of lower income households, younger households, and POC households.

Median Larkspur rents are higher than those in Marin County as a whole, and much higher than those in the rest of the Bay Area. According to HUD, fair market rent for a 2-bedroom in Larkspur increased by 105% from 2010-2020 while median renter household income in Larkspur only increased by 43% in that period (American Community Survey).

While new state law (AB 1482) has provided some protection to renters against unjust evictions and extreme rent increases, it does not go far enough for many households, particularly low-income households and those living on fixed incomes.

State law caps annual rent increases at 5% + the CPI, with a limit of 10% per year—but high inflation rates mean that many renters could experience multiple years of 5%-10% rent increases. Imagine a household that is paying \$2,000 a month for rent on an apartment, with that \$2,000 being half of their income. If their rent goes up 10%, that means they are paying \$2,200 a month now, or 55% of their income towards rent. While some households will receive pay raises or cost of living increases, few receive a full 10% and many do not receive these increases every year. Households with low incomes just do not have the income padding to accommodate multiple years of rent increases at this level, and even moderate-income households may find it challenging.

Older renters, disabled renters, terminally ill renters, and families with young children face devastating impacts from housing instability and displacement. Moving is one of the most stressful life events. Those who are forced to move by rising rents (economic evictions) or “no-fault” evictions usually move into smaller, lower quality housing far from jobs, services, and the community resources they have come to depend on. These moves cause lasting damage to the health and well-being of older adults and children in particular, disrupting social connections and children’s schooling. These households require additional protection, including

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protection from most “no-fault” evictions and relocation costs for those who must be displaced.

Anti-displacement measures should be included in the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. Housing experts now agree that the affordable housing toolkit should include the “three P’s,” affordable housing Production, affordable housing Preservation, *and renter Protections*. Adding measures such as a Tenants Bill of Rights, an enhanced just cause for evictions ordinance, and a rent stabilization ordinance with adequate documentation and enforcement measures would be a major step towards providing housing stability to almost half of Larkspur’s households. Note that Marin County is including these measures in its Housing Element, and that the Town of Fairfax is currently considering an enhanced Just Cause for Eviction and Rent Stabilization ordinance. Fairfax will be holding a workshop on this in September.

The Larkspur Town Council should schedule another, updated workshop on this topic *before* its Housing Element is completed and submitted, and seriously consider these options, following Fairfax’s example. In addition, we ask that you meet individually with the Skylark Tenants Union, members of the Marin Organizing Committee, and other advocates to learn more about the resources available to enact these measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Pendoley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Robert Pendoley  
Chair