

Emergency eviction protections in Contra Costa

BARHII Membership Meeting – April 17, 2020

What's been happening in Contra Costa?

- 5 of 19 jurisdictions adopted eviction moratoria in past 3 weeks
 - Concord, Richmond, Pittsburg, Antioch, El Cerrito
 - San Pablo pending
 - Richmond, Antioch are revisiting to improve
- Draft ordinance comes to 4/21 BOS emergency meeting
- Huge community support
 - 65 orgs → sign-on letter to BOS
 - 98 public comments at first BOS meeting, 75+ at next one
 - 400+ calls/emails to BOS members
 - Support across sectors: residents, service providers, labor, faith, philanthropy
 - Regional support: BARHII, EBHO, ACCE

Policy components

- Moratorium on all evictions (informal and court-filed)
 - Exceptions for health/safety
- Moratorium on all rent increases
- Grace period details are key
 - Length of time
 - Definition of terms
- Doing the math: \$2,400/mo average rent + 2 months back rent = \$4,800 extra to pay @ 120-day grace period to repay = \$3,600 (current & prorated back rent) due each of the 4 months after return to work, vs. \$20/hr job = \$3,600 gross income/month.

What helped us succeed?

- Rapid & opportunistic
- Broad coalition
- Under the radar
- Inside/outside strategies
- Access to content/legal expertise

What's making it hard?

Technical challenges:

- State policies (Governor, Judicial Council) created local confusion
- Detailed and technical – and the details matter
- Lack of model ordinance
- Contra Costa County proposed ordinance is likely weaker than cities'

Political challenges:

- Risk-averse county/BOS culture
- Pushback: “What about landlords?”
- No deep history of social justice advocacy in Contra Costa

What eviction moratoria *don't* do

- Prevent additional financial hardship post-emergency – it just kicks the can down the road
 - But without moratoria, thousands of evictions would be happening now
- Address systemic inequities caused by capitalism, racism
 - Black people, people of color, immigrants are disproportionately hurt
 - Low-wage residents tend to work in public-facing service sector and gig economy jobs that were first to be lost when stay-at-home order issued
- Address long-standing power imbalance between landlords and tenants
- Increase economic stability/opportunity for those living on margins

Thinking beyond the State of Emergency

- **Pessimistic outlook:**

- Back to business as usual – same old inequities & power imbalances
- Evictions multiply as soon as emergency moratoria are lifted
- Tenants evicted → property owners default → 2008 all over again
- Increase in corporate ownership of rentals → more tenants hurt

- **Optimistic outlook:**

- Regional housing trusts, statewide rental registry, stronger rent control/just cause protections, other innovations to protect tenants, preserve housing
- Increase in collective community power
- Shift from “me” to “we” as we realize our economic interdependence