



Take action to defend St. Paul rent stabilization

Join us on Wednesday, August 24th to **testify against Ordinance 22-37** and protect the rent stabilization policy that St. Paul voters passed!

After rent stabilization passed at the polls with nearly 31,000 votes, Mayor Carter stacked a Rent Stabilization Stakeholder Group with property owners and developers to water down the ordinance before it went into effect. Now, Council President Amy Brendmoen and Councilmember Chris Tolbert have co-authored **Ordinance 22-37**, an ordinance that gestures at the stakeholder group's best recommendations and runs with the worst, all before the rent stabilization policy even has a chance to work. We've analyzed their proposal through a renter justice lens. **Check it out and spread the word!**

<h2>Scrap it!</h2>	
<p>Ordinance 22-37 exempts affordable housing. Tenants who live in affordable housing are disproportionately low-wealth, BIPOC, disabled, queer, immigrant, elderly, and families with young children – these are the people who need renter protections the most! Excluding affordable housing from rent stabilization would remove protections from nearly 20,000 St. Paul renters and further entrench racial inequities in our housing system.</p>	
<p>Ordinance 22-37 creates a 20-year blanket new construction exemption that applies retroactively. A new construction exemption incentivizes landlords to tear down unsubsidized affordable housing to replace it with housing that is exempt from rent stabilization. It also disparately and unjustly impacts our disabled neighbors who rent their homes. ADA-compliant units can be incredibly difficult for renters to find, and are more likely to be found in newer housing because of new requirements and policies. Exempting new construction means we are taking away the right to stable rent from disabled renters who already experience disproportionate housing instability.</p>	
<p>Ordinance 22-37 introduces a form of vacancy decontrol, which would allow landlords to raise rent well above 3% between tenancies. In this proposal, landlords would be able to “bank” rent increases up to 3% for every year they do not increase the rent, then increase up to the total deferred amount once a tenant vacates the unit. Unlike in other cities, Ordinance 22-37 places no maximum limit upon the amount landlords can bank. Vacancy decontrol is particularly damaging when buildings change hands, as it incentivizes evicting current renters to make room for tenants who can pay higher rents.</p>	

<h2>Sounds good!</h2>	<h2>Almost there!</h2>
<p>Ordinance 22-37 preserves important parts of the rent stabilization policy that voters passed, such as the 3% cap on annual rent increases, and reaffirms existing Minnesota state law prohibiting retaliation against renters who file complaints against their landlords for violation of the ordinance. Last November, when nearly 31,000 St. Paul voters came together across race, income, and zip code to pass the nation's strongest rent stabilization policy, they knew what they were voting for. Tenants should be able to exercise their hard-fought rent stabilization rights without fear of punishment.</p>	<p>Ordinance 22-37 proposes that tenants are notified after their landlord is granted an exception to increase the rent beyond 3%. While this is a good step, tenants should be notified long before such a big decision about their housing is made. We believe that renters should be notified the second DSI receives an exception request. Tenants need as much notice as possible to connect with housing resources and obtain legal support if they believe the rent increase is illegal.</p>
<p>Ordinance 22-37 provides further clarity on the relationship between utilities and rent. Lease agreements should establish whether the landlord or tenant is responsible for paying each utility. If a landlord previously paid the tenant's utilities, and the landlord alters the lease agreement to require the tenant to pay instead, the landlord must reduce the rent to account for this change. In cases where the tenant pays the utility provider directly, that payment is not considered rent.</p>	<p>Ordinance 22-37 proposes a conditional version of Just Cause nonrenewal protections that only applies to renters in limited scenarios. Just Cause eviction protections are designed to prevent arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions by establishing that landlords can only evict renters for specific reasons. The version of Just Cause passed by the St. Paul City Council in 2020 (and rescinded in 2021) exemplifies what an effective Just Cause policy should look like.</p>