

Berkeley Citizens Action – November 2015 Newsletter

Teach-in: Housing Affordability Crisis in Berkeley & What We Can Do Sunday, November 22nd, 2-4:30 pm Berkeley Arts Festival, 2133 University

High rents and home prices make Berkeley unaffordable. People can't find housing. Renters live in fear of eviction. Let's change this.



Sponsored by the Ad Hoc Committee for a Progressive Berkeley with support from the Sustainable Berkeley Coalition, Berkeley Citizens Action, Berkeley Tenants Union, CALPIRG, Berkeley NAACP, Black Student Union of Berkeley City College, and Better Berkeley Working Group.

Facilitator

Paola Laverde, Rent board commissioner, and a bilingual public information officer for the state department of Industrial Relations, former interpreter, broadcast journalist and interviewer for the public good.



Speakers

Stephen Barton, Ph.D., former director of Housing Department and deputy director of the Rent Stabilization Program in Berkeley:

A substantial part of rent paid by Berkeley tenants is not necessary to profitably operate and maintain rental housing, but rather an “admission charge” for the privilege of living here. Economists call this “land rent” and recognize the value of land is a creation of the larger society. The public is entitled to regulate or recapture the value the public has created. This insight is fundamental to progressive housing policies, including rent stabilization, exactions from developers, and the proposed windfall profits tax on landlords. The public has a right is to use these funding sources to create socially-owned housing through community land



trusts, limited-equity cooperatives and non-profit housing corporations.

Moni Law, Affordable Housing Activist

Gentrification, the process of developing a poorer neighborhood into an upscale one, has economic benefits and negative impacts: specifically the displacement of poor, working class people, and people of color. This is especially problematic in rapidly gentrifying area of South and West Berkeley. Potential solutions will be shared on how to retain a vibrant multicultural community in the face of developer pressures and 'high end' market forces.



Rick Lewis, Executive Director, Bay Area Community Land Trust (BACLt) and former Housing Advisory Commission Member:

Rick will discuss Community Land Trusts and cooperatives as positive models of affordable housing, explaining how these differ from generic affordable rental housing, as a democratic model building resident and community empowerment. He will also present some local models and show how BACLt has worked to continue Berkeley's strong tradition of resident-controlled housing with the *Brown Shingle Collective*.



Austin Pritzkat, President, Berkeley Student Cooperative and member of ASUC Senate

Austin will focus on the affordable housing crisis and the privatization of public higher education, their impacts on students and educational access, and the role of student cooperatives in creating affordable housing and preserving educational access.



Katherine Harr, Berkeley Tenants Union

In addition to Berkeley's need for additional permanent affordable housing, we must protect, preserve and improve our existing rental housing. Current efforts to reinterpret and revise the Demolition Ordinance are needed to support one-for-one replacement of rent-controlled units with permanently



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continued from page 1, Katherine Harr
affordable housing. Many recent demolition applications have been for housing that has been shamefully neglected. Efforts toward preservation of rental housing must include revisions to the Rental Housing Safety Ordinance.

Forum Timekeeper

Yiwen Zheng is a Social Media Research Analyst Intern through Cal-in-Local-Government for BCA, and a political science major at UC Berkeley.



CALENDAR THESE IMPORTANT DATES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING



THURSDAY, NOV. 12, 6-8 PM:

Town Hall Meeting with Assemblyman Tony Thurmond on affordable housing and legislative solutions

Auditorium of the Oakland State Building, 1515 Clay Street in Oakland

SATURDAY, NOV. 14, 2015, 10 AM-NOON

Affordable Housing 101: What does it take to build and how do we get more of it?

South Berkeley Senior Center (2939 Ellis Street)

Speakers from East Bay Housing Organizations Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, Resources for Community Development, Senior Community Development Project Coordinator, and the City of Berkeley

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2015

5:30 PM: Council Worksession on Proposed Windfall Profits Tax for Affordable Housing: 5:30 pm.

Economic Overview of Berkeley's Rental Housing Affordability Crisis and Proposed Increase in Business License Tax on Residential Rentals

City Council Meeting: Numerous items related to housing and homeless services. 7-11 PM: Don't miss this meeting. Council Chambers, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Berkeley

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1, 2015

City Council Work Session on Housing: What does Berkeley want to build? Estimated start time 5:30 PM

City Council Meeting: 7-11 PM: Two housing related items were continued from Oct 27 and others may be added to the agenda. Agendas are not yet available, check back on city council website for location and time.



SPEAK OUT FOR RENT-CONTROLLED HOUSING

by Kathy Harr, Berkeley Tenants Union

Berkeley Tenants Union needs folk to come out to the City Council Meeting on Tuesday November 17th at 7 pm to support their appeal of the demolition of an 18-unit rent controlled building at 2631 Durant.

The applicant systematically destroyed the building by emptying it and allowing it to sit vacant, ignoring the blight ordinance and multiple city warnings to secure the building against trespassers, inviting the fire department to knock down walls and chainsaw holes in the roof, all for the purpose of gaining a permit under the demolition ordinance. This brazen approach to real estate speculation must be discouraged.

If we don't stop this demolition by having lots of people speak out, the current demolition ordinance means nothing anymore. If they will tear down 18 rent-controlled units that were occupied when the demolition was applied for, they will tear down anything. *Note: This is Item 21 on the November 17th City Council Action Calendar.*

RENT WAR CELEBRATION SONG

By Fred Dodsworth

Just us, each one and all of us,
there is no justice without us,
each one and all of us,
just as there is no town
or city without its people.
Each one and all of us fit
together to make this particular puzzle.
Without you this is no home,
just a deadening box without a soul.
In our wondrous and various
strange incarnations we create this magic
by bumping up and awkward all against
each other fitting loose and tight and barely
to make a place, our place in this mix, this mess,
this is what makes a community special,
this is what makes a neighborhood a home.
Without such a place and the people in it,
we are merely organic machines, little folded bits
of plastic, but this isn't us,
we believe in a better future,
a place where you and your lover,
every mother, every father, every child
can live a worthwhile life, a healthy life,
can claim a space, create a place
called home
where we celebrate our differences
and honor our similarities,
where we struggle with our demons
and dance with our better angels,
because every one of us deserves such sanctuary,
has a right to this place called home.
This is a human right.
We will fight for this right.
We will organize.
We do this for our whole human family.
We will stand strong and united.
We will not be divided.
For each of us and all of us
celebrates this commitment to justice.
There is no justice for any of us
if there is no place of justice
for each and all of us in a place called home.



Berkeley Citizens Action

A multi-partisan Political Action Club

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Address Correction Requested

If you did not also receive this newsletter electronically, please send us your email address to berkeleycitizensaction@gmail.com and add us to your e-address book. Thank you for your support.

Send Photos of Unsafe Rental Housing

The Berkeley Tenants Union wants your photos of hazardous housing conditions to support Councilmember Arreguin's item on the Council agenda to strengthen the Rental Housing Program.

On November 17th, council will vote on whether to strengthen the Rental Housing Safety Program. Property owners are not held accountable and too few inspections are made. Send councilmembers examples of the unsafe conditions that exist.

☛ Walk your neighborhood and snap photos of unsafe and unsanitary conditions: rotted wood, missing stairways or railings, mold and trash, like these examples at left and below.



Rotted wall and front stairs



2nd story door, missing stairs



trash pile

Send photos identifying unsafe conditions to council@cityofberkeley.info, or for greater anonymity, send to info@berkeleytenants.org

Join or renew your membership. Yes! I'll help BCA maintain a progressive presence!

Each mailing costs about \$250. Please send us your email address with your membership fee. You are also welcome to renew your membership on our website and make your donation there by Paypal.

Name: _____

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I would like to participate in the following: Steering Committee Organize Education forums
 Maintain Web Page and Newsletter Other: _____

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