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Community News

Sunnyvale housing commission ranks mobile home rent as top priority

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Sunnyvale's housing and human services commission is recommending the city council pay special attention in the coming year to rent increases at mobile home park residents.

The commission voted unanimously Nov. 16 to rank "rent stabilization" as the top issue to recommend that the city council study in January. The recommendation comes as groups form to protect mobile park residents from high prices and projects that could replace the parks.

"I believe it's important and that it needs to be studied and understood to see what can the city can consider putting in place to protect these residents," said Commissioner Diana Gilbert during the meeting.

One of the main driving forces behind the issue has come from residents of Plaza Del Rey Mobile Home Park. The park was sold to the Carlyle Group last year, and park residents say their rent rose by 7.5 percent earlier this year.

In August several residents of Plaza Del Rey contacted residents of other mobile home parks in the city and founded the Sunnyvale Mobile Home Alliance, which made rent stabilization for their parks a top priority. Many group members came to the commission meeting urging commissioners to recommend the issue be studied by council.

"This is an important issue to a lot of people. We're afraid we'll be priced out," said Ron Banks, a Plaza Del Rey residents.

Banks added that he, like many at the park, is on a fixed income from Social Security and is concerned about whether he could afford additional rent increases.

The council addressed rent stabilization earlier this year. In June, Councilmembers Jim Davis and Tara Martin-Milius both suggested studying the issue in 2017.

City staff recommended deferring the issue, suggesting instead that the council prioritize affordable housing efforts. Housing and human service commissioners disagreed, ranking the issue No. 1 of several issues presented to them. Other ranked study issues, in order, are exploring the introduction of a rent stabilization ordinance not specific to mobile home parks, reviewing below market rate housing ownership requirements, and considering revisions to certain requirements related to the conversion of mobile home parks.

If the council chooses to study rent stabilization, the first phase of the study would involve research into existing stabilization programs and assessing the benefits and costs of such an ordinance in Sunnyvale. It would be followed by community outreach and study sessions with the housing and human services commission. ##

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