

# The Truth about Tenant Protections

Saint Paul City Council has released a proposed ordinance that takes the first steps in following community calls for tenant protections. Because historic and current inequities have tilted the scales of justice and power dramatically towards landlords, those private interests often promote inaccurate information about tenant protection policies to undermine dignified, equitable conditions for the growing number of renter households across the region. Outlined below are the reasonable, proven and urgently necessary tenant protections proposed by the City – and the truth about the impact of those measures.

POLICY	Currently, without this ordinance...	In the future, with this ordinance...	Common myth	Reality
<b>Just Cause Notice</b>	Landlords can simply not renew a tenant’s lease for no reason, displacing tenants when they have done nothing wrong. This leaves renters vulnerable to retaliation when they try to assert their right to a safe, healthy, and dignified place to call home	Landlords would be required to provide a stated cause, like non-payment of rent, to end a lease.	<i>“This will make it harder for landlords to evict problem tenants.”</i>	Landlords already have the right to evict tenants who are not following the rules through their lease agreement. This would simply prevent non-renewals that are unjustified. This ordinance includes 10 scenarios in which landlords would be able to non-renew.
<b>90-Day Advance Notice of Sale</b>	When a property owner sells their building, tenants only have 30 days to vacate their unit and find a new home. Thousands of families live in fear that their building will be sold to another owner or investor who will upscale the property and price or push them out with little time to relocate their families and lives.	Landlords would be required to let their tenants know that their building is being sold 90 days in advance of the sale so that tenants can have more time to search for already scarce available housing.	<i>“This interferes with the market and my right to sell my property.”</i>	This ordinance does nothing to prevent landlords from selling their property; it simply gives tenants more time to humanely adjust to market changes that are outside of their control and maintain stability for their families.
<b>Security Deposit Limits</b>	There is no limit to what a landlord can charge for security deposits, which creates a barrier for households who earn steady (but low) incomes and are unable to save. It punishes those who are living month-to-month, which is a common occurrence considering 59% of American households live paycheck to paycheck <sup>1</sup> .	The maximum amount a landlord can charge for security deposit is one month’s rent.	<i>“This is more restrictive than state law and will position Saint Paul as an outlier. It’s unnecessary.”</i>	The majority of states in the U.S. already have security deposit limitations <sup>2</sup> .

POLICY	Currently, without this ordinance...	In the future, with this ordinance...	Common myth	Reality
<p><b>Tenant Screening Reforms</b></p>	<p>Right now, countless renters are barred from housing because of discriminatory screening practices that further harm communities of color who have suffered disparate policing and incarceration, as well as economic marginalization (redlining, predatory lending, to name a few).</p>	<p>This ordinance would help to address these longstanding inequities that were created and are perpetuated by the public and private sectors, and help to ensure that landlords give everyone a fair chance to access stable, dignified housing.</p>	<p><i>“This will increase the cost of housing because insurance rates will go up due to increased risk to property managers.”</i></p> <p><i>“Formerly incarcerated people need supportive services and case managers in order to be successful. Simply giving them housing does not ensure stability, and can even be a risk.”</i></p>	<p>Past criminal offenses do not mean that someone is unable to pay rent. A 2019 study conducted by the Wilder Research disproves the false assumptions about formerly incarcerated people<sup>3</sup>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of criminal offense categories have no significant effect on housing outcomes (including marijuana possession, minor drug offenses, prostitution, alcohol-related offenses, and more)</li> <li>• The effect of a prior criminal offense on a resident’s housing outcome declines over time and becomes insignificant</li> </ul> <p>People are not risks, and the idea that they are perpetuates the same racist and classist ideology on which redlining and other discriminatory practices are based.</p>

3- Wilder Foundation, Success in Housing: How Much Does Criminal Background Matter? 2019

Making up the majority of our vibrant city, more than half of St. Paul residents are renters. Deeply rooted in every neighborhood, renter households are the lifeblood of the economy, the heart of our community, the creativity and passion that make our city great. When a family pays their rent, they’re also paying the mortgage, and property taxes, for their landlords, making every tenant household an equal investor in our city. **Renters deserve basic human dignity and equal protection under the law. Policymakers should demand for the truth and protect the public good, not fall for false narratives that safeguard private profits.**



**The Alliance**  
thealliancetc.org