



ADUs: Tiny Homes with a Big Impact



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are known by many names: granny flats, in-law units, backyard cottages, secondary units, and more. The California Legislature declared that ADUs provide additional rental housing and are an essential component in addressing the state's housing needs. Recent changes to ADU laws have caused

construction to surge in Santa Monica. On controlled properties, new units built from conversion are rent controlled, and owners must file a Petition for Rental Unit Registration before renting. ADUs created through entirely new construction may qualify for an exemption. In both cases, owners should contact the Rent Control Agency.

Since 2023, the Agency has reviewed permit applications proposing more than 150 new ADUs on controlled properties, and some of those applications included the removal of parking, storage, or other tenant amenities. While there is no power in the rent control law to prevent the removal of amenities, there are two different types of decrease petitions that may help offset some of the impacts to existing tenants.

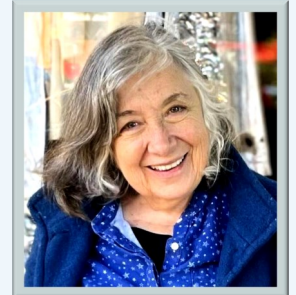
For the loss of parking, storage, or other base amenities, tenants may file a petition for a rent decrease, which would authorize a lower rent permanently, or until the amenity is restored. A construction-related rent decrease petition may also be filed in certain cases where ongoing construction activity causes reductions in services or maintenance or interferes with occupancy.

More information on both petitions is on our website. Visit santamonica.gov/rent-control-petitions or scan the QR code. You may also email us at rentcontrol@santamonica.gov or call our office at (310) 458-8751. 🏠



Vacancy Brings Changes to the Rent Control Board

After serving the maximum of two four-year terms, veteran Commissioner Anastasia Foster ended her long service to the Board in November, and her seat was filled by Phillis Dudick.



Commissioner Dudick

Commissioner Dudick, who begins her first term in December, served on the Annenberg Beach House Docent Council, is a board member of the NOMA neighborhood association, and is an active member of Santa Monicans for Renters Rights. Dudick and Commissioner Kay Ambriz were the only two qualified candidates for the two open seats on the Board and were the first to be seated without the need for an election following a modification to the Rent Control Charter adopted by voters in 2020. Ambriz already serves on the Board after having been appointed in June to complete the term of a member who resigned.

Foster, who served twice as Board Chair, joined with a passion for affordable housing and tenant rights. Her enthusiasm has been unwavering, and her efforts have significantly shaped policies that protect renters and promote housing equity in Santa Monica. She provided leadership on several voter-approved revisions to the rent control law, including reducing the maximum annual increase to rents from six to three percent.

During Foster's tenure, the Board adopted regulations eliminating the pass-through of surcharges from the property tax bill to tenants moving in on or after March 1, 2018 and capped them at \$35 for others; requiring that tenants be informed of their rights when signing leases, increasing the amounts for rent reductions when there are maintenance issues or when amenities are taken away; and helping fight corporate short-term rentals. While her commitment to the Board ends, her commitment to the community continues. In December, she accepts a new role on the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees. 🏠

Santa Monica Rent Control Board - 1685 Main Street, Room 202, Santa Monica, CA 90401

Commissioners: *Erica Lesley (Chair), Kurt Gonska (Vice-Chair), Kay Ambriz, Phillis Dudick, Danny Ivanov*

Executive Director: *Jonathan Holub*

New State Laws Help Tenants When Moving In and Moving Out



Finding and moving into a new apartment can empty your wallet, as recent renters know. Two new state laws are intended to make it easier for tenants to find and afford housing. First, **AB 2493**, prohibits landlords from charging prospective tenants a screening fee unless they return it to applicants who are not selected. An exception to this rule is if the landlord has a screening fee policy under which they review applications in the order received. In this case, the rental unit would go to the first qualified applicant, and fees are not charged to applicants who are not considered.

A second law, **AB 12**, which took effect on July 1 this year, limits the collection of a security deposit to one month's rent on most properties. Unless the tenant is a service member, landlords, who own no more than two residential rental properties that collectively include no more than four total units for rent, may continue to charge two times the monthly rent, but only if the landlord is a natural person or a limited liability company in which all members are natural persons. Existing rent control regulations prohibit landlords from increasing the deposit once it has been collected.

Two other laws help tenants at the end of their tenancies. **AB 2801**, which takes effect on April 1, 2025, requires landlords to provide better documentation of a unit's condition before and after a tenancy to justify deductions from the security deposit. This includes photographic evidence of necessary repairs and proof that they were completed.

Finally, **AB 2347** provides tenants who are facing an unlawful detainer action (eviction) 10 days to respond to the court, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and judicial holidays. Previously, only five days were provided. Any tenant who has been served a notice to vacate by their landlord should seek immediate legal assistance. The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles in Santa Monica is a good place to start. They may be able to assist eligible tenants or make referrals to qualified attorneys.

These are brief summaries of the new state laws. More information may be found in California Tenants, an easy-to-read publication from the California Department of Real Estate, on our website at santamonica.gov/rent-control-information-by-subject or by contacting the Department of Consumer & Business Affairs at (800) 593-8222. ▲



YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

City Planning Wants to Hear from You

If you own property or live in one of the City's multi-family districts (R2, R3, and R4 zones), we want to hear your thoughts on potential increased height limits of fences, walls, and hedges in the front yard. Use the QR code to take this short survey with your input! ▲

surveymonkey.com/r/fencewallhedge



LANDLORDS: REMEMBER TO REGISTER NEW TENANCIES

The Rent Control Law requires owners to register new tenancies within 30 days. Landlords who do not register may not raise rent for the tenant until the tenancy is registered. Our online Civics portal allows landlords and their authorized agents to:

- Register new tenancies.
- Pay annual registration fees.
- Review prior submissions.

To access the Civics portal visit:

rentcontrol.santamonica.gov. ▲

The POD Program is Currently Accepting Applications

The Preserving Our Diversity (POD) program provides cash-based assistance to low-income, long-term Santa Monica residents in rent-controlled apartments to help achieve a minimum monthly after-rent income of \$986 for a one-person household or \$1,724 for a two-person household. This assistance is paid in the form of a debit card and is intended to help participants meet their basic needs. You may qualify for POD if you meet ALL of the following requirements:



- ▲ You are at least 65 years of age;
- ▲ You moved into a Santa Monica rent-controlled apartment before January 1, 2000;
- ▲ Your annual household gross income is less than \$44,150 (1 person) or less than \$50,450 (2 person);
- ▲ Your "after-rent" income is less than \$986 (1 person) or less than \$1,724 (2 person).

To learn more about the program and to apply, please scan the QR code or visit santamonica.gov/housing-pod.



Any qualifying households must submit their applications for the POD program by January 15th, 2025 to ensure application preference.

If you have any questions regarding the program, please email the City's Housing Division at podprogram@santamonica.gov. ▲

This information is available on our website in Spanish, Farsi, and Amharic – or call (310) 458-8751 for a copy.

- Esta información está disponible en nuestro sitio web en español.
- این اطلاعات در وبسایت ما به زبان فارسی موجود است.
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santamonica.gov/rent-control-seminars-and-newsletters

Upcoming Events

Landlord-Tenant Forum 2024

Monday, December 9

5:30 to 8:30 pm

Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Martin Luther King Auditorium

A joint presentation of the Consumer Protection Division of the City Attorney's Office and Rent Control, this popular event brings together property owners and managers, tenants, and city staff to discuss hot topics. This year's subjects include:

- ▶ Roundtable updates on landlord/tenant topics around the state
- ▶ Updates on changes to local laws
- ▶ Tenants' rights to replace roommates
- ▶ Tenant protections during construction
- ▶ Q&A

Attendance is limited and registration in advance is required. To register, please scan the QR code below or visit forms.gle/sVSx8Psg6MBrlzKh6. ▲



Seminario Para Inquilinos

(Tenant Seminar in Spanish)*

Martes 10 de diciembre

6:30 - 8:30 pm


Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave.

Thelma Terry Bldg.

Este seminario se dirige a los inquilinos para que conozcan los servicios disponibles a través de la oficina de Control de Rentas, tales como las protecciones contra el desalojo, cómo se determinan el alquiler y los servicios, y qué recursos tienen a su disposición para cuestiones relacionadas con los alquileres, los servicios y el mantenimiento. No es necesario inscribirse.

**Our annual Tenant Seminar in English will be held as usual in the spring. This seminar is designed for tenants to learn what services are available through the Rent Control office such as how rent and amenities are determined, eviction protections, and what remedies are available for issues related to rents, amenities, and maintenance.▲*



Printed with soy ink 

TENANTS

The amount in the circle at left is the MAR for your unit, per Rent Control records and presumes owners are in compliance with the rent control law. **If you moved in recently, our records may still list the MAR for the previous tenancy. In most cases, owners may reset the rent with each new tenancy.** In addition to the MAR, an owner may pass-through to tenants half (\$9.50 per month) of the registration fee Rent Control charges for each unit.

*For tenancies that began before March 1, 2018 and on properties not sold or reassessed since then, owners may also add surcharges based on the property tax bill. With the fee and surcharges, the legal rent for your unit may be \$9.50 to \$44.50 higher than the MAR shown. If the message is "Tenant Call," or if you have questions about your rent, please call us.

OWNERS

Each July, owners receive a report listing the MAR that is listed in Rent Control's records for every rental unit on their property or properties. If you are an owner, the circle at left should not include a MAR. If a MAR is listed, please call us.



City of Santa Monica
Rent Control Board
1685 Main Street, Room 202
Santa Monica, CA 90401

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First Class Mail
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INFO



Public Counter: M-F* 8:00-12:30; 1:30-4:30



Telephone: (310) 458-8751



Website: www.santamonica.gov/rentcontrol



Email: rentcontrol@santamonica.gov



www.facebook.com/santamonica Rent Control

*City of Santa Monica is closed every other Friday.

Inside the Fall 2024 issue:

- ✓ **ADUs: Tiny Homes with a Big Impact**
- ✓ **Changes on Rent Control Board**
- ✓ **State Law & POD Program Updates**
- ✓ **Upcoming Seminars**

Para obtener una traducción de este boletín en español, vea el aviso con las instrucciones correspondientes en el interior de este boletín.

