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CITY OF SAINT PAUL

S.A.F.E. HOUSING & TENANT PROTECTIONS – HISTORY



Presentation Overview

- **Introduction & Purpose** – Overview & importance of tenant protections
- **Brief History & Context** – Evolution of policies, S.A.F.E. Housing, Rent Stabilization
- **CAO: Legal Challenges** – Court ruling, policy impact
- **DSI: Tenant Protections & Rent Stabilization** – Enforcement, 2024 state law updates
- **OFE/PED:** Tenant & landlord education/accessibility & engagement
- **Next Steps** – Policy review, stakeholder re-engagement, timeline
- **Q&A & Discussion**



What are the goals to help us reach our desired result?

Saint Paul residents will fully realize stable, accessible, fair, and equitable housing if we can:

Increase
Housing
Access

Decrease
Housing
Displacement

Affirmatively
Furthering
Fair Housing



Why This Work is Critical

- **Tenant Challenges**
 - Barriers to housing due to unclear screening criteria
 - Increased risk of displacement and eviction
 - Lack of clear, accessible information on rights & responsibilities
- **Housing Stability Goals**
 - Strengthen protections to reduce displacement
 - Improve transparency in rental processes
 - Ensure education for tenants & landlords
- **Data-Driven Approach** – Informed by community engagement & housing trends



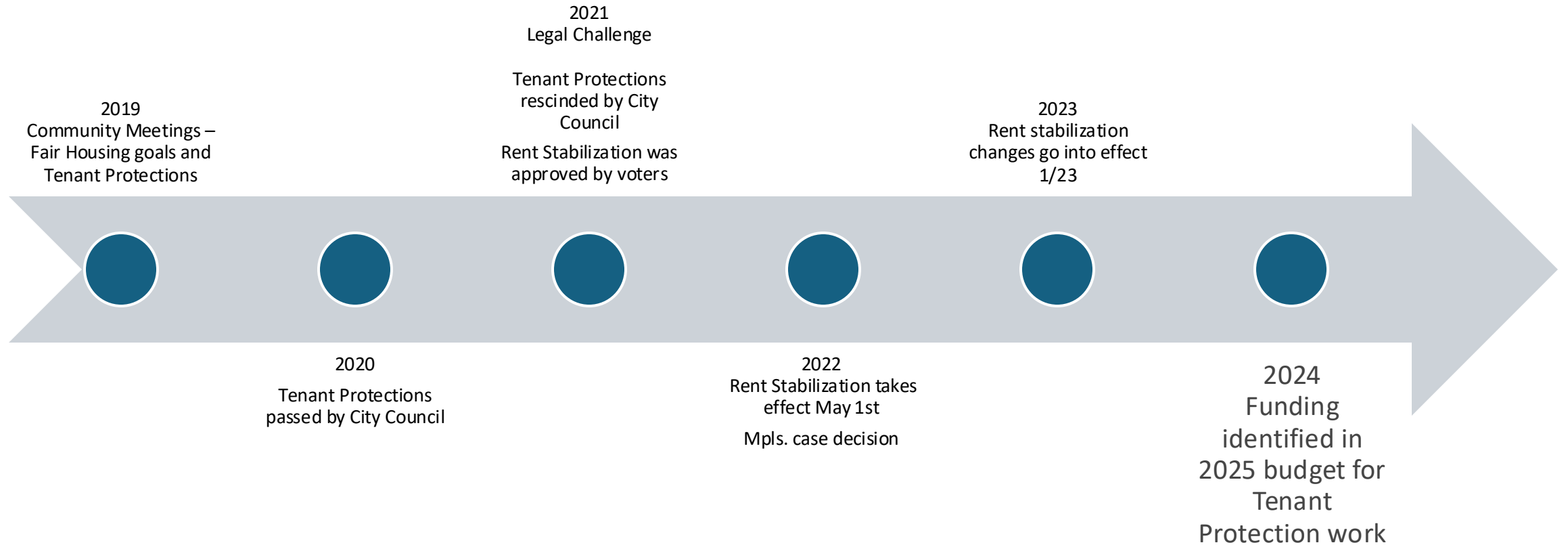
Stakeholder Engagement 2019

- 14 community events, 283 people engaged, 801 data points
- 27% Renters, 24% Homeowners, 15% Organizations, 4% Potential Renters, 30% Landlords
- Representing 8,000+ housing units in Saint Paul





Fair Housing Timeline (2019 – 2024)





Rental property owners' lawsuit and court-ordered pause of SAFE Ordinance

- Property owners argued ordinance was unconstitutional
 - Just Cause Notice because limited ability to exclude, indefinite stay
 - Tenant Screening provisions because it forced owners to rent to tenants they otherwise would not
- Court agreed-found ordinance was likely unconstitutional taking
 - Distinguished Saint Paul Ordinance from Minneapolis' Ordinance (which didn't have just cause notice and allowed owners to screen for any factor as long as individualized and reasoning was provided for refusal to rent.)
- Court criticized City's stated reasons and support for ordinance
 - Ordinance did not identify problem in some places or provide link to how ordinance would help



Court Injunction Order and Rescinding of SAFE Ordinance

- Court granted a preliminary injunction to Plaintiffs meaning the City could not enforce the SAFE Ordinance
 - Minneapolis' Ordinance had also been challenged with opposite result, but was on appeal
 - In Saint Paul case, Plaintiffs were entitled to attorney fees for their lawsuit (at that early stage Plaintiffs claimed approximately \$285,000)
- Council rescinded the ordinance, leaving gaps in tenant protections
- Rent Stabilization was later introduced, included some protections
 - Lawsuit on RSO but court dismissed (City prevailed) because RSO is rent control with several avenues for approved rent increases; either by ordinance provisions or through documentation



Existing Tenant Protection Programs

- Fire Certificate of Occupancy proactive and complaint-based inspections
- Transparency in rental applications, SPLC 54
- PED - 4D Program, tax-base and other implications
- HREEO, only entity in the state with HUD authority to investigate housing discrimination cases
- Rent stabilization
 - Added a tool to Saint Paul's housing toolbox
 - Aims to address a shortage of affordable residential rental housing
 - Acknowledges a property owners' right to a "reasonable return on investment"
 - Low-income housing providers and new construction are exempt
 - Includes just cause vacancy provisions



2024 State Law Additions – 504B

- Protections from housing discrimination
- Protections related to any local, state, or federal requirements of public or subsidized housing
- Disclosure of accommodations available for support animals
- Individual taxpayer ID allowed instead of SSN without discrimination
- Provisions for delayed occupancy due to construction delays
- Limit on rent liability for tenant abandonment
- Protection against landlord screening for pending evictions, nonpublic or expunged court filings, or an eviction that has not resulted in an order to vacate
- Protection for domestic abuse emergency calls to include mental health crises
- The right for tenants to organize
- Transparency in utility billing
- Additional detail from courts and screening services
- Robust written notice of filing requirements
- Clear Attorney General investigation and prosecution authority



Ensuring Accessible Information on Tenant & Landlord Rights & Responsibilities

Goal: Provide clear, easy-to-access information on **tenant and landlord rights & responsibilities** under city and state law

Current Resources:

- Information available on **DSI, PED, and OFE websites**
- OFE maintains a **plain-language website** with key rights and responsibilities

Future Plans:

- **Create a central city webpage** for renters & landlords, available in **multiple languages**
- Provide **physical copies & posters** for widespread access
- **Partner with community organizations** for outreach & info dissemination

Looking Ahead:

- Proposed **2025 state law** may require landlords to provide the **Landlord/Tenant Handbook** at license renewal
- Keeping resources **updated** will require ongoing maintenance



Q&A