

From: [Polly Heintz](#)
To: [Greg Weiner](#)
Subject: FW: Rent Control
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 4:57:16 PM

From: Maureen McKasy <maureen@soteradesign.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 12:49 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1 <Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Maureen McKasy <maureen@soteradesign.com>
Subject: Rent Control

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Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

To whom it may concern at the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota,

I am a 64 year old woman who has worked hard her entire life. I have an owner occupied duplex in the Macalester groveland area. This duplex was my retirement plan. Well, until the city of St. Paul reared its ugly head. I have had the same renter since 2014. She is a single woman who, due to family circumstances, has her young grandchild live with her half time. He is a wonderful boy and I have grown quite fond of him. I have raised the rent a total of \$50.00 since 2014. So she could stay. And I wanted him to have a stable place to live with all of the uncertainty in his life. I had a wonderful mother who said we must take care of those less fortunate. I am now reaching retirement age. I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2022. Then I got sepsis. And I haven't been the same since. I am tired. It is time for me to retire. But I can't. I can't because the city got in my business. I get that there are slum landlords out there. They should be kept in check. I am not one of those landlords. I was brought up better than that. Yet you lumped me in with them. And now you are considering giving a break to new developers? What about the person who has been paying high property taxes to be in this city for decades. Why am I not being considered as you make these decisions for me? I charge \$1275.00 per month for a lovely two bedroom lower duplex. I am priced at minimum of \$600.00 under market. I did this because I could. But I can't any longer. I need the income. I deserve the income I counted on as I planned for my retirement. What do you suggest I do now? Sell and move to Mendota Heights like the rest of my neighbors? I have been a fierce advocate for St. Paul my entire life. Could never imagine moving out of the city. Until now. I would prefer my taxes not increase more than 3 percent a year too. Can you do anything about that seeing you have so much power over the city? I am becoming a very bitter constituent. I feel I have done what is right throughout my life. How can you help me remain in my home that I love and cared for? Waiting with bated breath, to hear from anyone.

Maureen McKasy
2079 Randolph Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
612-385-5668
Maureen@soteradesign.com

From: [Marvalyne Tripp](#)
To: [Greg Weiner](#)
Subject: FW: Rent Stabilization amendment AND Tenant Protections - Thank you
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 3:33:26 PM

Hi Greg, Dan would like his comment added to the public record.

Thanks,
Marvalyne

From: Dan Krivit <Dan.Krivit@outlook.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 3:19 PM
To: Saura Jost <Saura.Jost@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: Tom Basgen <Tom.Basgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; #CI-StPaul_Ward3 <Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Rent Stabilization amendment AND Tenant Protections - Thank you

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Councilmember Jost,

Thank you for your leadership in sponsoring the proposed amendment to the Rent Stabilization ordinance. Also, thank you for co-sponsoring the proposed new Tenant Protections ordinance.

In 2021, I was a volunteer that supported and solicited signatures on the original Rent Stabilization ballot initiative petition. Once formalized on the ballot, I also volunteered to door-knock in my neighborhood for its adoption. Although we are home owners in Saint Paul, I believe strongly that our whole City is better off due to the passage of the Rent Stabilization ordinance. Such a policy is just one tool to address our significant housing challenges. It MAY also be just one of the many reasons for a housing supply shortage. Nonetheless, I support the proposed Rent Stabilization amendment, in part to allow our housing policy discussion to move beyond the current blame game about 'rent control' to the more significant issues such as the root causes of homelessness in our City.

I also support the strategy to link the Rent Stabilization amendment with the proposed Tenant Protection as a package. While both proposals have merit on their own as individual policies, I think the package approach helps broaden the discussion to incorporate consideration of larger harms to renters in Saint Paul. These harms are often due in part to the significant imbalance of power between tenants and landlords.

Saint Paul as a whole needs both the proposed amendment to the Rent Stabilization ordinance AND new Tenant Protections. Please continue your excellent and consistent work to pass both. We appreciate your clear voice of reason.

Beyond policy *adoption*, I also hope the City fully *implements* and *enforces* the changes. Passing ordinances is not the end goal. The goals should include increased housing supply, AND more

equitable and fair treatment of tenants on an ongoing basis. Objective measurements should be established with annual reports back to the City Council with opportunities for public comment on implementation progress.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Dan Krivit
1071 Cleveland Ave. S.
Unit #104
St. Paul, MN
Dan.Krivit@outlook.com
Cell: 612-616-7739

From: [Kristin Koziol](#)
To: [Greg Weiner](#)
Subject: Fw: Rent Control
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 2:58:15 PM

For Ord 25-29

From: Maureen McKasy <maureen@soteradesign.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 12:51 PM
To: #CI-StPaul_Ward4 <Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Maureen McKasy <maureen@soteradesign.com>
Subject: Rent Control

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To whom it may concern at the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota,

I am a 64 year old woman who has worked hard her entire life. I have an owner occupied duplex in the Macalester groveland area. This duplex was my retirement plan. Well, until the city of St. Paul reared its ugly head. I have had the same renter since 2014. She is a single woman who, due to family circumstances, has her young grandchild live with her half time. He is a wonderful boy and I have grown quite fond of him. I have raised the rent a total of \$50.00 since 2014. So she could stay. And I wanted him to have a stable place to live with all of the uncertainty in his life. I had a wonderful mother who said we must take care of those less fortunate. I am now reaching retirement age. I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2022. Then I got sepsis. And I haven't been the same since. I am tired. It is time for me to retire. But I can't. I can't because the city got in my business. I get that there are slum landlords out there. They should be kept in check. I am not one of those landlords. I was brought up better than that. Yet you lumped me in with them. And now you are considering giving a break to new developers? What about the person who has been paying high property taxes to be in this city for decades. Why am I not being considered as you make these decisions for me? I charge \$1275.00 per month for a lovely two bedroom lower duplex. I am priced at minimum of \$600.00 under market. I did this because I could. But I can't any longer. I need the income. I deserve the income I counted on as I planned for my retirement. What do you suggest I do now? Sell and move to Mendota Heights like the rest of my neighbors? I have been a fierce advocate for St. Paul my entire life. Could never imagine moving out of the city. Until now. I would prefer my taxes not increase more than 3 percent a year too. Can you do anything about that seeing you have so much power over the city? I am becoming a very bitter constituent. I feel I have done what is right throughout my life. How can you help me remain in my home that I love and cared for? Waiting with bated breath, to hear from anyone.

Maureen McKasy
2079 Randolph Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
612-385-5668
Maureen@soteradesign.com

From: [Jordan Brasher](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#); [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Cc: [#CI-StPaul Ward1](#)
Subject: Public comment on Ordinance 25-29 amending rent stabilization
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 12:54:43 PM
Attachments: [Ord 25-29 Public Comment Letter.docx](#)

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Dear City Council,

I have attached a letter as my public comment opposing Ordinance 25-29 amending rent stabilization. Kindly include it on the next relevant agenda.

It is my hope that CM Bowie, cc'd here, as the CM for my ward will read and consider my comments as well.

Warmly,
Jordan

Dear St. Paul City Council,

My name is Jordan and I am a renter in Ward 1. Thank you for extending the public comment period for Ord 25-29 amending rent stabilization, as I could not make the public hearing in person earlier this week. I enclose my remarks on the amendment below for your careful consideration.

I am writing in opposition to the proposed amendment and requesting CM Bowie especially to vote NAY on it. This amendment to rent stabilization undermines our local democratic process, reproduces class-based, segregated housing in the city, and does not address the root causes of our city's housing crisis. The council has provided no evidence that amending rent stabilization will even lead to new housing construction at all and ignores evidence from other cities across the country that have ended rent control without unleashing a new housing construction boom.

The 3% annual cap on rent increases passed at the ballot box in 2021 has already been weakened by the council, with this amendment set to further weaken it. This undermines the will of the majority of voters in the majority-renter city directly, who have already made their voices heard in support of rent stabilization in its initial form. In addition to the amendment's violation of the will of the people, I am concerned that an unelected interim council member from Ward 4 stands to cast a potentially deciding vote in favor of the amendment. If this amendment passes under these conditions, the council's credibility will be beyond repair. For this reason, I recommend – at a bare minimum – **staying over the vote on this ordinance** until Ward 4 has an **elected** representative to ensure a fair vote takes place on a deeply unpopular ordinance that contradicts the will of the people.

I oppose this amendment on its merits, too, because it will reproduce class-based housing inequality in the city, effectively creating a two-tiered, segregated housing development pattern. Who will be able to afford to live in this new unrestricted housing? Certainly not the majority of the working renter population in the city. Landlords of older buildings will lose the incentive to maintain or upgrade their older, existing properties and shift focus instead to newer, luxury construction. This could lead to a decline in the quality of existing housing stock and cause a clustering effect whereby older, neglected housing stock also sees a neglect to nearby amenities while newer construction sees a spatial concentration of high-end, luxury amenities. The geographic and social segregation resulting from this dual-track housing market will be bad for our city – reducing mixed income integration spatially and socially across our neighborhoods. The only people who benefit from this are wealthy developers, landlords, and owners of capital.

Market-based approaches to the housing crisis are the problem – *not* the solution. Developers build for profit, not human need. Without rent stabilization, will developers build \$800/month apartments, or will they build \$2,500 or \$3,000/month units? The answer is obvious, because one generates profits for them, and the other does not. The idea that building more housing will introduce more housing supply and thus necessarily house more people – solving or even meaningfully addressing the city's housing crisis – is an oversimplified, false one. What kind of housing will be built, and for whom? Spurring new construction without maintaining rent stabilization won't guarantee that the people who live and work as renters will be able to afford it – just that the Ryan Companies and other big-time developers will get richer.

Additionally, if the city intends on moving forward with this ordinance and undermining the will of the majority in doing so, it ought to offer some proof that it will work. The city extensively studied the initial rent stabilization measure, contracting the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban & Regional Affairs to study and provide recommendations and best practices for implementation. No such study has been conducted on this amendment. Other cities, such as Portland, Maine, that have passed rent stabilization – and maintained it without any exemption for new construction – have seen record high construction in recent years. Thirty years ago, Boston completely repealed rent control and it failed to result in a magical surge of new housing stock, only deepening housing inequality. Now, the Boston mayor is actually trying to bring back rent control. Peer-reviewed research does not support the argument that rent control slows development, so what basis does this council have for this ordinance? It has provided no real-world evidence so far. This council must provide concrete evidence that weakening rent control will provide affordable housing development if it decides to move forward with contravening the will of the majority with this ordinance.

Finally, I have to say that the pairing of Ordinance 25-29 with 25-31 sure seems like a disingenuous carrot on a stick to appease tenants with needed protections while creating a larger landscape of unfairness and inequitable development. We are not naïve. Under the guise of being a “compromise” between neoliberals and progressives, between developers and renters, and between working people and the owners of capital, the real compromise is actually the council's reputation and credibility alongside the conditions under which the working people of this city live and struggle to get by. Don't cave into the capital strike. If private developers cannot or will not build deeply affordable housing in this renter-majority city, let's build it without them.

From Ward 1,
Jordan

From: [Steve Gjerdingen](#)
To: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Renter Protections ordinance
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 9:01:47 AM

You don't often get email from segjerdingen@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hi St. Paul City Council,

I understand that you will soon be voting on a new Renter's Protections ordinance in the city. I would discourage you from passing this ordinance anytime soon in its current form for multiple reasons:

1) I rent out one bedroom in a SFH to a stable tenant and to me it's entirely unclear whether this ordinance is written for big corporation landlords or someone like me. It needs to be clearly articulated whether or not small owner-occupied rental housing falls under these types of laws. This council made the same mistake of not defining that when they passed the rent control ordinance.

2) If this ordinance does include small owner-occupied landlord situations, I have concerns about its wording, particularly in the section about screening tenants. 193.03a states that all screening requirements must be made available in detail to all applicants prior to accepting an application. The Fair Housing Act states that owner-occupied properties with 4 units or less do not need to adhere to the same principles of screening as larger rental operations. The way your ordinance is currently worded (under bullet point subsection A) sounds more strict than the Fair Housing Act.

This is problematic. I should be allowed to interview a potential renter face-to-face and 'feel the air' regarding them without having to base my decisions entirely on a checklist that I create and then publish. I should be allowed to evaluate their fit in my home using intuition as much as logic. Being forced to share a kitchen/bath/living-room with someone just because they pass some checklist is not right. The city shouldn't have this level of business in personal affairs.

3) I understand the city may be removing rent control for new properties in the very near future. Why are we potentially making multiple changes to renting policy in St. Paul (by also introducing a renter protection ordinance) at once after the one rent control change made in 2021 by itself already had a very damaging effect on development in St. Paul for several years after? I think undoing the harm from that one ordinance and waiting a few years to look for a positive impact on development (before introducing any new restrictive laws to landlords) is the way to go.

--Steve

From: [Kyle Steinke](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#)
Cc: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Oppose Rent Stabilization Rollbacks
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 9:01:46 AM

You don't often get email from kylesteinke@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To the Members of the St. Paul City Council,

My name is Kyle Steinke. I am a public school teacher, union member, and longtime St. Paul resident. I'm writing to strongly oppose the proposed amendments that would reshape our voter-approved rent stabilization ordinance to appease developers and investors.

Let's be honest about what's happening here: St. Paul's working people voted for rent stabilization in 2021 because the market failed us. Now, instead of honoring that democratic mandate, some city leaders want to gut the policy under pressure from real estate interests who see housing not as a human need but as a profit engine.

We've heard endless claims that rent stabilization has "scared off" construction. But the facts don't support them. Construction has slowed across the entire region—even in cities without rent control. Developers are using rent stabilization as a scapegoat to extract more concessions, just like they always do. The idea that protecting renters is why we have fewer cranes in the sky is convenient for them, but it's not true.

Exempting new construction or post-2004 properties doesn't solve the housing crisis—it creates a two-tier system that rewards demolition and fuels displacement. It encourages developer speculation that destabilizes neighborhoods and prices out low-income residents, all under the false promise of "affordable housing."

Rent stabilization wasn't perfect initially, and it's already been watered down once. To gut it further would be a betrayal of the public trust—and a giveaway to profiteers.

We need bold, public-minded policy that puts people before profit. That means standing firm on rent stabilization, not carving it up to satisfy investors. We've tried developer-driven policy for decades. It hasn't delivered affordability, only higher rents and displacement. Let's stop making decisions that serve private profit and start focusing on long-term stability for the people who actually live here.

Sincerely,

Kyle Steinke

From: [Rebecca Noecker](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: Fw: Saint Paul Downtown Alliance Letter to City Council - Rent Stabilization Ordinance 25-29
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 6:15:54 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[SPDA Letter to Council - Rent Stabilization Ordinance 25-29.pdf](#)

Please add the attached to the public record on rent stabilization.

Best,
Rebecca

Rebecca Noecker | Saint Paul City Councilmember, Ward 2

15 West Kellogg Blvd – Suite 310B | Saint Paul, MN 55102
651.266.8622 | rebecca.noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us

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From: Joe Spencer <joe.spencer@downtownstpaul.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 2:10 PM
To: Rebecca Noecker <Rebecca.Noecker@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: FW: Saint Paul Downtown Alliance Letter to City Council - Rent Stabilization Ordinance 25-29

You don't often get email from joe.spencer@downtownstpaul.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I just wanted to pass along an extra word of thanks for your support of this ordinance change. I know there are opponents that are unhappy. I'm sincerely appreciative of your support and the commitment for our downtown work.

Thanks!

Joe



JOE SPENCER | PRESIDENT
[Saint Paul Downtown Alliance](#)
joe.spencer@stpdowntownalliance.org
mobile : 651-503-3040

For scheduling, please copy [Emma Burns](#)
Stay in the know about downtown Saint Paul, [sign up for our newsletter](#).

From: Joe Spencer <joe.spencer@downtownstpaul.com>

Sent: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 12:29 PM

To: ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us; Rebecca Noecker <Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Saura Jost, Ward 3 <ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us; ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us; ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us; #CI-StPaul_Ward7 <Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Saint Paul Downtown Alliance Letter to City Council - Rent Stabilization Ordinance 25-29

Dear Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance, I am writing to express our strong support for Ordinance 25-29, which proposes an essential amendment to Chapter 193A.08 of the Legislative Code. This ordinance would exempt all residential rental properties built after December 31, 2004—including newly constructed housing and commercial-to-residential conversions—from rent stabilization.

This change is absolutely critical to the future of downtown Saint Paul – itself, the City’s primary economic engine supporting its services, programs and priorities City-wide.

Downtown is facing a historic crisis. Commercial office vacancies have climbed to a startling 32% and continue to rise. Prominent buildings at the core of our city are being vacated, abandoned, and boarded up. Without swift and strategic action, we risk permanent disinvestment in the heart of Saint Paul.

We must do everything we can to reinvest in these properties and reposition them as housing. Converting underutilized commercial buildings into residential use is one of the most promising pathways forward, but these projects are complex and expensive. This amendment provides the predictability and flexibility that developers and capital markets require to make those investments viable.

This approach directly aligns with the **Downtown Investment Strategy** released by the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance in March 2024. That strategy identified “accelerating the creation of housing—particularly through conversion of commercial office space” as its top priority. We followed through by launching the **Saint Paul Downtown Development Corporation**, a new entity focused exclusively on revitalizing distressed downtown real estate.

This ordinance is a crucial tool in that work. It doesn’t just support recovery—it creates the conditions for downtown to emerge stronger and more economically resilient than before. Moreover, bringing more residents to downtown adds to its overall vibrancy, safety, and long-term stability. A thriving residential population supports small businesses, animates our streets, and strengthens our community fabric.

A healthy downtown lifts the entire city. Right now, downtown Saint Paul contributes just 12%

of the city's tax base—down from previous years. In peer cities, that figure averages 22%. As a result, we are seeing the burden of taxes shift increasingly to residents outside of downtown, which is contributing to growing frustration in neighborhoods throughout the city. By enabling new housing investment, this change helps us reestablish downtown as an engine of growth that can help rebalance that burden in a more equitable and sustainable way.

We urge you to adopt Ordinance 25-29 and ensure that Saint Paul is positioned for a strong and inclusive future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Spencer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "Spencer" clearly distinguishable.

Joe Spencer

President, Saint Paul Downtown Alliance

From: [Shannon Koloc](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#); [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#)
Subject: Saint Paul Rent Ordinance
Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025 3:15:15 AM

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing in regards to rent stabilization.

In February 2017 I moved to Lowertown as a single, mid-thirties woman where I lived happily at Rayette Lofts. With the passing of the rent cap, paired with my renewal time period and when it went into effect, my rent jumped from \$1,160 to \$1,518 in April 2022.

In April 2022 I moved to a new West Side building, the scenic mere weeks after it opened. With the passing rent cap in place, my rent was raised the standard 3% in April 2023 and again in 2024 at which time I decided to move again, frustrated my unit was now priced substantially higher (more than \$120/month) than more desirable available units at that time in both size and location.

I went month to month until I moved into another new building, Esox House at Harriet Island when opened on June 1, 2024. I live in a one bedroom that faces the river, and it's the perfect size and location for me and my enormous, rambunctious 2 year old Standard Poodle, Mickey. Rent is not cheap here, I currently pay \$2,050 for rent and \$150 for parking. There were a handful of residents that moved in the first weeks of June that signed a year lease. Two residents that face the river, in the same floor plan, received their renewal notices. One, did not see a rent increase or increase in parking. The other was presented with an offer of \$22/month increase for rent, and raised parking expenses of \$25/month. Both of their monthly leases are currently less than \$1,500.

The initial lease I signed was longer as I didn't want to, again, be caught in the awkward period of first round renewals, when property management is still trying to fill the buildings and charging what they can to show investors returns. The building has struggled to lease-up and has been running outrageous move-in offers like three months free + free parking. At the same time, I'm concerned they are about to milk me for everything I'm worth.

Should my rent be increased 3% (\$61.50) and parking be increased like my neighbor Tom Green (yes, that's his real name), my living expenses before utilities will be \$86.50 more per month. That is a lot for a single woman to be responsible for coming up with in a difficult economy. What's worse, is that the open units on my floor, same floor plan, same view, will still be priced at \$2,050. Why should I have to pay more than \$1,000 more per year than someone moving into one of many available units, just because I got here first.

At both Rayette, the Scenic, and now here at Esox house, I've seen apartment rates drop significantly below what current resident pay, and watch neighbors move out because property management is increase 3% year over year only to drop the rent when existing tenants move out.

This policy is unfair and disruptive to community building. Neighbors become friends, dogs develop routines, your neighborhood becomes home. Moving every couple of years just to escape rent increases invokes disruption, void of permanence.

I want to see policy that is pro-community, anti-investor. If my unit a few doors down is going for \$2,050 when my lease is up, I don't want to be charged more. I want to pay market rate. Not 3% more every year. If the building offers parking for \$150 one year and then \$175 the next, subsidizing giving away free parking for new residents, I don't think that's fair. Why does new, underground, assigned residential parking need to increase at all? We are not downtown, there is no industry rate to point to. Why does it make sense to pay \$175, the same rate I paid for underground parking in Rayette .. the actual city .. with no demand.

Raising parking is a sneaky way to pinch more from residents because of management turnover and inability to fill units. I don't want to be locked in a cycle I can't afford and need to move in a year when my rent and parking goes up again and suddenly I'm paying more than \$200 dollars more per month in 2026 than when I proudly moved in

and began facilitating a sense of community in 2024.

Please prevent companies from charging rent increases above market rate, period. I want to pay what a new resident is offered. Moving is the worst and it's expensive, but pretty soon it'll be necessary to saunter to the suburbs away from the life I love if greedy capitalists want to price us out of our community.

Earlier this year I found out I was pregnant. After making the hardest decision a healthy, want-to-be-mom 40 year old woman could possibly make, I made the decision to terminate a pregnancy, of a baby I wanted, want someday, at Regions because the economy is in chaos and living in the margin of 1-2 executive orders that could put me on the brink of poverty isn't fair to a baby, and isn't fair to me to live with the stress during a pregnancy, alone. I want to stay here, I want to afford to stay here, I want to know I can afford to live here pregnant, and then with a baby and Poodle brother walking by the river and through the woods. I want stability for myself and my neighbors.

Thank you,

Shannon Koloc

From: [Tom Basgen](#)
To: [*CI-StPaul_Contact-Council](#)
Subject: FW: Statement on rent stabilization changes
Date: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 5:46:00 PM

Hi,

Please add the below testimony from Bill Lindeke to the public record for the RSO amendment.

Tom Basgen (he/him)
Legislative Aide to Councilmember Saura Jost
Saint Paul City Council – Ward 3
15 W Kellogg Blvd. Suite 310C
Office: 651-266-8631
Direct: 612-360-9506

From: Bill Lindeke <blindeke@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 9, 2025 5:24 PM
To: T Basgen <tbasgen@gmail.com>; #CI-StPaul_Ward3 <Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Statement on rent stabilization changes

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Hi CM Jost:

Thanks for your leadership. Sorry i couldn't stay around to give this testimony in person.

-Bill

Hello. My name is Bill Lindeke. I live in Frogtown. I spent 9 years on Planning Commission, I teach urban studies at the University of Minnesota, and I was on the city's Rent Stabilization task force.

Since 2021, I've written over 30,000 words in my column at Minnpost or on my personal website describing the city's rent stabilization policy in its various iterations; that's about half of a book. Through it all, I've tried to keep an open mind. For example, when I first heard about rent stabilization, I was a supporter and even signed the petition. Later, after I researched the details of the policy that was on the ballot — no new construction exemptions, no vacancy decontrol, not pegged to inflation — I changed my mind and campaigned against the ballot measure, arguing that was going to lead to disinvestment in St. Paul, particularly when it came to new market-rate

housing. At the time proponents called my arguments was nonsense, and after the vote, I would have been happy to be proven wrong. In the last four years, that has not happened. Instead, St. Paul is languishing.

This time of year, I leave my house in Frogtown in Frogtown most days and walk over to the Victoria Avenue Green Line station. Whether I want to or not, I spend a few minutes looking at vacant lots. All through Ward 1, especially on University Avenue, you see vacant lots and vacant buildings, and they're increasing in number. A building burnt down across the street a few years ago. A gas station was demolished at Hamline, and remains empty grass. The unrest following George Floyd's murder triggered arson, and those building footprints remain empty to this day. There are vacant lots all in every ward; right across the street from City Hall where we sit, there's an empty lot on one side and a boarded up building on the other.

This is bad for St. Paul in many ways, and it's particularly bad for the budget. I think cutting off the city from investment, in the way that rent stabilization did, has made our city's much worse off than they would have been otherwise.

The flip side is of course that it's supposed to help renters. To me anyway, it's unclear how much this is policy helping renters. Of course everyone has an anecdote, but if you looked up housing data at Housing Link, a reliable source of monthly information,, Minneapolis rents are going down while St Paul's are jumping. The cost of a two-BR apartment in St. Paul has gone up 13% year-over-year.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ledger, I've [written about our housing data](#), where housing production has cratered and vacant are proliferating. That's a very expensive outcome, both for delayed or unmade investment, and by the subsidies to housing construction that now appear necessary.

The most notable casualty of our poorly done rent stabilization policy have been sites that are ready for reinvestment, places like the ones I worked on at the Planning Commission, where the city has spent a lot of time and money on planning: most notably Highland Bridge but also places like the West Site Flats, the State Capital Area, United Village, the Hamm's Brewery, or many parcels all around our Downtown. In some cases, the city is on the hook for TIF bonds that have already paid for infrastructure and other costs, and where we might not see the necessary return due to the lack of investment. In other cases, the city has had to directly subsidize projects that might have been financed privately were it not for RS. All over the city, sites sit empty that might be transformational for their communities. If we do nothing, they'll stay vacant for another decade or more thanks to the effects of rent stabilization on investment,

This isn't my ideal solution; I would have preferred pairing strong tenant protections with full vacancy decontrol and a rolling exemption window for new construction — this is a policy I pitched repeatedly during city's the task force meetings, but it got went nowhere during discussions where both sides were firmly dug in and inflexible. The current plan put forward by Council Members Jost, Noecker, and Bowie is a good idea and deserves your support. We can't keep our heads in the sand about a policy that sound good but don't work. This is a very expensive way to make an ideological point.

When the debate over rent stabilization was as happening four years ago, advocates hoped St Paul would become a national example that other cities could point to and learn from. Well, they got their wish. Instead, I have heard many city leaders use St.

Paul ask an example of what not to do. At some point we need to fix this problem, and the sooner the better.

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422.89 CO2 ppm he/him/his