



May 18, 2020

Saint Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
City Hall 310
Saint Paul, MN 55102

RE: Support for Tenant Protections Ordinance

Dear Mayor Carter and members of the St. Paul City Council,

St. Paul 350 supports the proposed S.A.F.E. housing tenant protections ordinance, in solidarity with the members of the Equity in Place alliance, the City of Saint Paul HREEO Commission, the Teamsters Local No. 120, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, and many Saint Paul residents including both landlords and renters.

As Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan states, "Many climate solutions are also equity solutions."¹ St. Paul 350 agrees, and we believe tenant protections are an example of how equity solutions can also be climate solutions.

Reducing emissions

For example, tenant protections can play a key role in lowering our municipal carbon footprint, as studies have shown that "the greatest greenhouse gas reductions come from housing that is affordable to low-income families and individuals."²

Eviction forces displaced families to move away from transit rich development in order to find affordable places to live. To make a bad situation even worse, these residents are the most likely to depend on transit as their primary means of transportation. As the Climate Action & Resilience Plan notes, 88% of residents without access to vehicles are renters.³

For those who do own vehicles, eviction significantly increases how much fuel they burn in order to access food, employment, child care, and friends and family in their former communities.

¹ Saint Paul Climate Action & Resilience Plan (2019) pg 9, <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/climate-action-planning/climate-action-resilience-plan>

² Can Curbing Gentrification Help Stop Climate Change? (January 25, 2017), <https://psmag.com/news/can-curbing-gentrification-help-stop-climate-change>

³ Saint Paul Climate Action & Resilience Plan (2019) pg 17, <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/climate-action-planning/climate-action-resilience-plan>

Addressing past and present inequity, and strengthening democracy

In addition to the commitment to reducing carbon emissions, equity is core to St. Paul 350's mission.⁴ Due to historic and on-going inequities, we know that communities that are most at risk from the increasingly severe effects of climate change are also most in need of tenant protections.

Injustices such as forced marches, boarding schools, and genocide in the case of the Dakota and other Indigenous people; and segregation, red-lining, and mass incarceration of Black, brown, and people of color are all part of a "historic pattern of designed disenfranchisement."⁵ The tenant protections in this ordinance, in particular the protections for people with arrest and conviction records and the limitations on lookback periods for certain crimes, are a small step toward addressing some of these systemic injustices in St. Paul.

St. Paul 350 believes that a thriving democracy where every family can put down roots is one of the best tools we have for reversing the injustices that are harming our communities and our climate. The more stable our housing is, the more capacity we will have to organize for change that benefits us all.

Conclusion

St. Paul 350 strongly believes that a just and fair future for all is one in which every member of our communities has equal access to healthy food and clean air and water. Having fair access to housing is an inextricable part of that.

We thank the City Council for prioritizing housing access and affordability during this time of great need, and we commend the S.A.F.E. housing tenant protections ordinance to you as a step in the right direction. Please vote YES.

Sincerely,
Saint Paul 350

⁴ As stated in the mission of our parent organization, MN350, "We work to guarantee that benefits flow first to marginalized communities that are historically excluded from economic gain" <https://mn350.org/how-we-work/>

⁵ Keeping Renters in Their Homes Through Collective Action (November 27, 2018), <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/sasha-forbes-aicp/keeping-renters-their-homes-through-collective-action>