

Rental protection and tenants' perspective

Policy insights from NOAH listening sessions



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El Concilio and BAMBE

■ El Concilio and Nuestra Casa

- El Concilio is a CBO incorporated in 1980, committed to increasing education, employment and access to quality of life services to underserved communities in San Mateo County
- NC is a CBO serving areas of SMC, undertaking community education, leadership development, and community-driven advocacy

■ BAMBE

- Since 2014, \$32mil+ in rebates across 47k+ units, 590+ projects, >5% of MF units in the Bay
- Predominantly market rate class A+B, condos, and deed restricted affordable, i.e. not NOAH



What is Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)?

- Generally defined as residential rental properties (single or multifamily) that are **affordable** (below area median or average rent), **but unsubsidized** by any federal, state, or local programs
- Often associated with smaller MF properties with deferred maintenance, old/inefficient envelopes, systems, and appliances



Why focus on NOAH? Why SMC and ALCO?

- BAMBE is becoming an equity program, has historically underserved NOAH properties
- Both SMC and ALCO showed active interest in this project idea
- SMC-OOS sought a method for working more frequently with CBOs, streamlining contracting process, leverage community knowledge and trusted relationships for more effective community engagement



Reaching out to tee up listening sessions

- EC and NC provide direct services
 - Trusted entities in the community for decades
- Word of mouth through existing interactions
 - Flyer, online link highlighted digital divide
 - One-on-one follow up and calls
- Hosted where folks live as NC and EC have offices in the communities they serve



Questions (renters)

Icebreaker: What's an improvement (e.g. piece of furniture, cookware, electronic, shrine, decoration) that makes your apartment feel more like home?

1. What do you like about where you live - both building and neighborhood?
2. What brought you to where you live now?
 1. Is the community different now than it was when you moved here? If so, how?
3. Describe your current apartment and building?
 1. How old is the building? How big is it? (number of apartments, roughly)
 2. Do you live alone, with family, or with roommates?
 3. Do you know your neighbors? Would you say your building has a sense of community?
 4. How has your rent changed since you've been living in your apartment?
4. Do you worry about displacement/eviction? If so, why?
5. How has the pandemic impacted your living situation?
6. Describe your relationship with your landlord and/or property manager
 1. How often do you interact with them? Is there a separate property manager and/or maintenance person you mostly interact with instead?
 2. What do you feel is your landlord's (or property manager's) primary motivation? E.g. to make more money or provide a livable place in their community
 3. Do you feel like they have your best interests at heart? Why or why not?
7. Think of a recent time that something was broken or needed repair in your unit or building. What happened and how was it handled?
 1. Did you ask your landlord to fix it? What was their response?
 2. How did it affect your comfort, health, safety, or other aspects of your day-to-day life?
 3. If you didn't ask your landlord or they were resistant, how did you go about resolving the issue?
 4. What other building issues have you faced and how long did they take to get fixed, if at all?

Questions (owners)

Icebreaker: What's an improvement you made at your property that tangibly benefitted you AND your renters?

1. How long have you owned or managed property in San Mateo County? How did you get started owning or managing multifamily properties?
 1. Is the community different now than it was when you first bought property or started managing property? If so, how?
2. Describe the properties you currently own/manage. (What first pops into your mind or you feel is important for us to know?)
 1. How old is your building(s)? How big is it/how many units?
 2. What type of tenants have rented your properties?
 1. I.e. families with children, multi-generational families, young professionals, students, etc?
 3. Would you say your building has a sense of community?
3. What do you like about owning and/or managing multifamily properties?
4. How has the pandemic impacted your experience owning or managing the property(ies)?
 1. Did you have long-term tenants that were suddenly unable to pay rent? If so, how did you handle the situation?
5. Going forward, what would motivate you to keep doing this long-term? What would discourage you?
 1. If so, why?
 2. If not, why not?
 1. Too much stress
 2. Maintenance/operation costs too high
 3. Capital improvement costs too high
 4. Not enough revenue from rent
 5. High sales value
6. Describe your relationship with your tenants.
 1. How often do you interact with them? Is there a separate property manager and/or maintenance person you mostly interact with instead?
 2. What do you think attracts your tenants to your property(ies)?
 3. In addition to being able to pay rent, what makes someone a good tenant?
7. Describe a recent incident where something at your property failed and needed to be fixed. What happened?
 1. How was it handled and coordinated with renters?
 2. How long did it take?
 3. How was the renter affected?
 4. Did this same issue pop up again?
 5. Was the renter helpful/compliant in getting the issue resolved/fixed?
8. How do you prioritize capital improvement projects/maintenance issues at your property/ies?
 1. Planned or replaced on failure?
9. If you could change or improve one thing about your property/ies, regardless of cost, what would it be? Why?
 1. How would this improve your day-to-day life? And potentially the life of your renters?
 2. What upgrades would benefit both you and renters?
 3. What other glaring issues would you want to get fixed?

Learnings and questions to keep in mind

- Undocumented renters are hesitant/fearful of interacting with owners/managers/government programs – **How can we as an energy program help to allay that concern?**
- Renters want upgrades that improve their quality of life but genuinely fear displacement/increased rent perceived to be associated with upgrades – **Where's the data?**
- Energy programs will not solve this multi-faceted issue/opportunity but can make positive marginal change through reducing owner op costs and reducing upward pressure on rents, while lower renter utility bills



Suggestions for similar engagement

- Pandemic presented scheduling difficulties, now easier to meet in person, provide hybrid if possible
- The message and the messenger, folks engage with a **trusted** entity, rally all people of good will
- From information extraction to ongoing involvement/interaction
 - Folks want to know what comes out of it so they feel like they contributed to something (not just the gift card)



Thank you!

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