

Resolution No. 18 – 002

A resolution of the Rent Control Board of the City of Santa Monica urging the City Council to make the Preserving Our Diversity (“POD”) pilot program a permanent program.

The Rent Control Board of the City of Santa Monica resolves as follows:

WHEREAS, in 2016, the City Council concluded that there was a need to expand affordable housing policies in the City in order to support the City’s strategic goal of maintaining an inclusive and diverse community and, specifically, concluded that such policies might include a local rent subsidy program to help long-term, low-income seniors who live in rent-controlled apartments; and

WHEREAS, low-income persons are disproportionately rent burdened and are, therefore, at greater risk of losing their housing; and

WHEREAS, low-income seniors are even less able than younger persons to cope with the tragedy of economic displacement; and

WHEREAS, the City, state and federal government programs, and various non-profit entities have made great efforts to provide subsidized housing for low-income persons, but those programs are insufficient to meet current needs; and

WHEREAS, it can cost up to \$650,000 per unit just to create suitable low- to moderate-income housing, and there are limited funds and limited real estate to create such housing even at that cost; and

WHEREAS there is currently a 6,000-household waiting list for individuals and families wishing to rent affordable housing created by Community Corporation of Santa Monica; and

WHEREAS, because of the high cost of creating new affordable housing in the City—and the limited available real estate on which to create it—the most cost-effective way to ensure that currently-housed low-income seniors remain housed in their existing rent-controlled units is to provide direct rental assistance; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the City of Santa Monica created such a direct rental-assistance program and called it the Preserving Our Diversity, or “POD”, Program to prevent low-income seniors from losing their controlled rental housing by reducing their rent burden, help those tenants to live with greater dignity, and allow the City to gauge the effectiveness of POD as a housing-preservation and anti-displacement strategy and model; and

WHEREAS, the POD pilot program has provided help to 22 severely rent-burdened households, meaning that they spend more than half their income on rent, and those households have an average head-of-household age of 72; and

WHEREAS, the annual cost of keeping these 22 households housed costs less than creating one unit of new affordable housing, and allows existing and new affordable housing to be offered to those not already housed, or inadequately housed; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Monica Rent Control Board is one of the parts of the government of the City that has the most direct involvement with rent-burdened tenants in rent-controlled units, and regularly sees first-hand the devastation that can occur when the burden exceeds a tenant's means—especially if that tenant is an elder,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Rent Control Board of the City of Santa Monica hereby expresses its support for the POD Program, and urges the City Council to explore whether the program may be made permanent and expanded to help all households who qualify under whatever criteria the City Council deems proper.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 14th day of June, 2018.



Anastasia Foster, Chair

ATTEST:



Lonnie Guinn,
Board Secretary