



AGENDA
Community Relations Commission
Regular Meeting
Council Chambers, 305 W. Third Street
May 19, 2025
6:00 p.m.

To join remotely, click on the link below:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88020854613?pwd=vM2jWFb5h2IElpeEfPqAcSP94OZDyE.1>

Or telephone (toll-free): 888 475 4499 (Toll Free)

Meeting ID: 880 2085 4613

Passcode: 553483

If you wish to speak during public comments or a particular item on the agenda, please sign-on by following the zoom call in steps listed above. Once the Chair calls for public speakers, press *9 to raise your hand, or if online, click the raise hand icon in the Zoom interface to inform the Chair you would like to speak during the public speaking section for that particular item on the agenda.

YOU MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. ATTEND THE MEETING AT THE LOCATION LISTED ABOVE OR VIA ZOOM
2. EMAIL COMMENTS OR REQUESTS TO SPEAK BEFORE THE MEETING
 - a. Submit a request to speak no later than 3:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting by contacting the Commission Secretary Martha Guillen at martha.guillen@oxnard.org. Please indicate the agenda item number in the subject line.
3. PROVIDING PUBLIC COMMENTS REMOTELY DURING THE MEETING
 - a. To provide a public comment during the meeting dial 888-475-4499 (Toll Free) and enter the Meeting ID and Passcode listed above as the Zoom details for this meeting. When the Chair announces the particular item on the agenda you want to speak on, press *9 to raise your hand. Once called on, press *6 to unmute your phone.
 - b. Public comments on agenda items will be taken following the announcement of the item. After the item is announced, members of the public shall have three minutes to register or otherwise be recognized for the purpose of providing public comment.

A. ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. SUBJECT: Minutes of the meeting of April 21, 2025.
RECOMMENDATION: Approve.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

At a regular meeting, a person may address the Community Relations Commission only on matters

within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. The presiding officer shall limit public comments to three minutes. The Commission cannot enter into detailed discussion or take action on any item presented during public comments not on the agenda. Such items may only be referred to the Commission Secretary for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent agenda for discussion. Unless otherwise approved by the Commission, persons wishing to speak on items not on the agenda should do so during public comments.

D. REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

1. SUBJECT: Presentation on Housing Department's Efforts to Combat Housing Discrimination from Albert Ramirez, Oxnard Housing Assistant Director and Rent Stabilization Program Supervisor.
RECOMMENDATION: That the Community Relations Commission receive and file the presentation.

Measure M Presentation Recording Link:
<https://youtu.be/e5XORxzJIDY>

E. COMMISSION BUSINESS:

1. SUBJECT: Election of 2025 Community Relations Commission Officers.
RECOMMENDATION: That the Community Relations Commission elect a Chair and Vice Chair for 2025.
2. SUBJECT: Creation of the 2025 Annual Report Ad-Hoc Committee and assignment of members.
RECOMMENDATION: That the CRC establish an annual report ad-hoc committee to sunset on October 6, 2025 and appoint two members.
3. SUBJECT: Creation of the 2025 Community Recognition Awards Ad-Hoc Committee and assignment of members.
RECOMMENDATION: That the CRC establish the 2025 Community Recognition Awards Ad-Hoc committee to develop the criteria and program to sunset on October 6, 2025 and appoint two members.

F. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION SECRETARY

The Commission Secretary shall report on items of interest to the Commission occurring since the last meeting. The Commission cannot enter into detailed discussion or take action on any items presented during this report. Such items may only be referred to the Secretary for administrative action or scheduled on a subsequent agenda for discussion.

G. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners may individually report on items of interest or concern outside of Ad Hoc Committee reports. The Commission cannot enter into detailed discussion or take action on any item presented during these reports. The Commissioner's report shall not exceed three minutes.

H. ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Commissioners may request that items be placed on future agendas for extended discussion.

I. ADJOURNMENT



TO: Community Relations Commission

FROM: Albert Ramirez, Assistant Director, albert.ramirez@oxnard.org, 805-385-8016

DATE: May 19, 2025

SUBJECT: **Housing Department's Efforts to Combat Housing Discrimination**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Relations Commission receive and file a report on the Housing Department's efforts to combat housing discrimination.

DISCUSSION

Fair Housing Program

One of the Housing Department's key programs is supporting the enforcement of federal and state fair housing laws that make it illegal for people and entities that provide housing from discriminating against or harassing tenants, homeowners, residents, their guests, and homebuyers because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics can include, but are not limited to: gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship, immigration status or religion. These laws apply to most providers of housing and services related to housing, such as landlords, tenant screening companies, real estate agents, home sellers, builders, lenders and housing authorities.

In an effort to adhere to these laws, the City of Oxnard has partnered with the County of Ventura to contract with the Housing Rights Center (HRC) for fair housing services. Annually, the County of Ventura contracts with HRC for \$94,280 with the City of Oxnard contributing \$25,548 towards the contract, using funding from its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant program.

Under the County contract HRC provides three core services to all of Ventura County, including the City of Oxnard.

1. Fair Housing Client Services - Offer a toll-free telephone number for fair housing inquiries, investigate alleged cases of fair housing law violations, and when needed seek remedial action.
2. Outreach - Prepare, reproduce and distribute flyers and materials, coordinate public service announcements and advertisements, deliver presentations to landlords, property managers and tenants.
3. Training - Train government agencies and affordable housing provider staff on fair housing laws.

From the period of July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024, HRC assisted 9 Oxnard residents

with inquiries of discrimination and counseled 48 residents on various tenant issues. Of the discrimination inquiries, only 2 cases were opened, with one being closed for inconclusive evidence and the other still under investigation.

The City of Oxnard's partnership with the County of Ventura and its contract with HRC, continues to play a vital role in combating housing discrimination.

Proposed Tenant-Anti Harassment Ordinance

In recent months, the Oxnard City Council has received testimony from numerous tenants expressing concerns about harassment and retaliation they've endured due to complaints they've filed with the City's Code Enforcement and/or Rent Stabilization & Just Cause Eviction Divisions. In response to the testimony, City Council directed the Housing Department to bring forward a Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance to address these issues plaguing the community.

On April 29, 2025, the Housing Department brought forth the first reading of the Tenant-Anti Harassment Ordinance for City Council's consideration, which passed on a 6-1 vote.

Under the proposed ordinance, prohibited harassment can include, but is not limited to the following:

1. Reduction or elimination of housing services, such as cutting off of electricity, gas, and water.
2. Failure to complete repairs/maintenance.
3. Abuse of the right of entry to the premises.
4. Engaging in discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, color, sex, ancestry, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, age, marital status, familial status, parenthood, pregnancy, disability, medical condition, occupancy by a minor child, or citizenship.
5. Refusal to acknowledge or accept receipt rental payments.
6. Inquiring as to the immigration or citizenship status of a tenant or threatening to disclose their status.
7. Retaliating, threatening, or interfering with a tenants right to engage in political activities, retaliating against and/or threatening a tenant for inquiring or seeking assistance from a government or social services agency.

Violations under the proposed ordinance are a misdemeanor and may be criminally prosecuted by the City. Based on the experience of other jurisdictions with similar ordinances, only the most egregious cases are prosecuted as violations of tenant anti-harassment laws. The ordinance also allows an aggrieved tenant, the City, or an organization to pursue civil action for damages and the recovery of attorney fees. The ordinance would apply citywide to all residential tenancies.

Adoption of the proposed ordinance would be ineffective without adequate staffing and resources to enforce the ordinance. Based on research with other cities, to launch a citywide program at least two (2) positions are necessary: one (1) partially dedicated Assistant City Attorney and one (1) fully dedicated Housing Investigator.

The two positions necessary to enforce the proposed ordinance were requested as part of the FY 25-26 budget. If the positions are approved, staff will return to the City Council on June 26, 2025, for a second reading of the proposed ordinance, which if approved, would cause the ordinance to be in effect 30 days thereafter.

Adoption of a Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance would provide another mechanism to combat discrimination and harassment within the City.

Attachments

1. April 29, 2025 City Council Report and Proposed Ordinance
2. PowerPoint



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

REPORTS AGENDA ITEM NO. M.2

DATE: April 29, 2025

TO: City Council

FROM: Brenda Lopez, Interim Housing Director, (805) 385-8092, brenda.lopez@oxnard.org

SUBJECT: Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance. (20 minutes)

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council:

1. Review and approve the first reading by title only and waive further reading of the proposed ordinance titled: "ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OXNARD, CALIFORNIA, ADDING ARTICLE III TO CHAPTER 27 OF THE OXNARD CITY CODE ESTABLISHING TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT PROTECTIONS"; and
2. Authorize two full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, and the associated budget, as part of the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget for implementation of the proposed ordinance.

(The Community Services, Public Safety, Housing & Development Committee approved 3-0 on March 25, 2025.)

Please click the following link to view the required Measure M pre-recorded presentation video: https://youtu.be/nUFWdpBlq_I

BACKGROUND

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of cases reported against landlords who are employing coercive tactics in order to induce tenants to vacate their rent stabilized units. Rent stabilized units are subject to a limitation of annual rent increases, for specified properties to 4%.

Some of the reported tactics include: reducing housing services, issuing eviction notices based on false grounds, threatening to contact immigration authorities or refusing to complete repairs required by law. These tactics often force tenants to vacate their units, which in turn allows landlords to raise rents to market rate rent without abiding by the City's 4% rent caps, for applicable units, or going through the City's Fair Return Petition Process.

Several jurisdictions such as Santa Monica, West Hollywood, Oakland, San Jose and Los Angeles have seen similar trends, resulting in the adoption of tenant anti-harassment ordinances. It has been reported that the anti-harassment ordinances serve as a deterrent to illegal conduct and assist tenants in their legal defense against landlords who engage in such harassment.

In response to escalating reports of landlord harassment in Oxnard, Councilwoman Basua and Perez requested staff bring forth a Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance for City Council's consideration. Housing staff engaged Mr. Stephen Lewis, Esq. (Mr. Lewis) to prepare a Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance. The proposed ordinance incorporates best practices from the various jurisdictions consulted, continuing the City's moderate approach, while also ensuring the ordinance did not violate any constitutional protections or published appellate opinions.

On March 25, 2025 staff introduced a draft Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance to the Community Services, Public Safety, Housing & Development Committee. At this meeting, staff received input from the Committee, public and

various community stakeholders. Although there were a number of changes requested, consensus was reached amongst the stakeholders and Committee Members for two (2) changes, which are further described below.

DISCUSSION

The March 25, 2025 Committee staff report, without attachments, is included as Attachment 3. That report should be read in conjunction with this staff report.

The proposed ordinance prohibits harassment by residential landlords and identifies specific acts and omissions by landlords that constitute prohibited harassment. Violations under the ordinance are a misdemeanor and may be criminally prosecuted by the City. Based on the experience of other jurisdictions with similar ordinances, only the most egregious cases are prosecuted as violations of tenant anti-harassment laws. The ordinance also allows an aggrieved tenant, the City, or an organization to pursue civil action for damages and the recovery of attorney fees. The ordinance would apply citywide to all residential tenancies within the City. A copy of the proposed ordinance is attached to this report (Attachments 1 and 2).

For the ordinance to be effective it would require at least two staff positions, which are discussed in more detail later in this report. The two positions associated with this ordinance will be included for Council consideration of the FY 25-26 budget. Therefore, if the ordinance is approved on April 29th, the ordinance will not come before the Council for adoption until after consideration of the FY 25-26 budget. An ordinance does not go into effect until 30 days after adoption. This means, at the earliest this ordinance would not be effective until at least the end of July.

During the Committee meeting several comments were received and ultimately, consensus was reached and the Committee recommended two (2) changes to the proposed ordinance, as outlined below:

1. Section 27-42(A)(3) addresses an owner's right to access a rental unit. A request was made to add language specifying the hours during which entry is permitted. In response and in collaboration with community stakeholders, staff proposes adding the following subsection:

(v) "entries outside of normal business hours, which are defined as 7 AM to 7 PM, Monday through Friday, Saturdays 8 AM to 12 PM, except in cases of emergency or when the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises, entry may not be made during other than normal business hours unless the tenant consents to an entry during other than normal business hours at the time of entry."

2. Section 27-42 (A)(10) was amended to clarify "good faith":

"...This subsection shall not apply to communications and conduct that are made in connection with actual pending litigation or litigation preparation, including any communications and conduct subject to Civil Code section 47 in conjunction with the "good faith" requirements stated in *Action Apartment Assn., Inc. v. City of Santa Monica* (2007) 41 Cal.4th 1232."

Implementation of the Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance

In preparation for implementing the proposed ordinance, staff reviewed over a dozen anti-harassment laws to better understand the staffing, budget and outcomes associated with the implementation of their respective laws. Based on this research, staff recommends an approach in alignment with the City of Santa Monica, which is a standalone anti-harassment ordinance so it will cover all residential tenancies within the City.

The City of Santa Monica's Tenant Harassment Ordinance applies to the 33,505 renters as identified in their Housing Element, as compared to an estimated 22,327 housing units in Oxnard that the proposed ordinance would apply to.

The City of Santa Monica receives approximately 200 complaints a year and on average 5-10 of those result in litigation. Each of those complaints warrants a thorough investigation which often results in substantial staff time needed to prepare these cases prior to the City Attorney's office receiving them. Santa's Monica's ordinance is administered by the City Attorney's - Consumer Protection Unit, which is staffed by five lawyers, two investigators and support staff.

Adoption of a Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance would be ineffective without adequate staffing and resources to enforce the ordinance. Based on research with other cities, to launch a citywide program at least two (2) positions are necessary: one (1) partially dedicated Assistant City Attorney and one (1) fully dedicated Housing Investigator.

Enforcement of the proposed ordinance is contingent upon City Council approval of the additional staffing necessary for its implementation. Therefore, if the ordinance is approved on April 29th, the proposed ordinance would return to the City Council for consideration of adoption after the FY 25-26 budget is adopted.

The Assistant City Attorney would conduct legal research, prepare opinions and regulations, prosecute civil or criminal violations related to the Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance and other municipal codes, and represent the city in a variety of litigation. The current salary range for an Assistant City Attorney is: \$156,976.56 - \$216,831.68.

The Housing Investigator would investigate tenant complaints, conduct research, interview witnesses, prepare reports and make referrals for criminal prosecution, civil litigation or to non-profits organizations. The current salary range for a Housing Investigator is: \$59,839 - \$113,367.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This agenda item supports the Quality of Life strategy. The purpose of the Quality of Life strategy is to restore and increase quality services and programs that enrich Oxnard's diverse community, promotes safe neighborhoods, encourages community engagement, and supports our residents in their efforts to improve their quality of life.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of the proposed ordinance will have a new fiscal impact on the General Fund. An annual budget of approximately \$505,000 is needed to support the two positions, budgeted at mid-range of the salaries, including benefits and fixed charges such as workers compensation, liabilities, unfunded liabilities, etc.

COMMITTEE OUTCOME

On March 25, 2025 staff introduced a draft Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections Ordinance to the Community Services, Public Safety, Housing & Development Committee. Written comments regarding this item were received from the Law Office of Barbara Macri-Ortiz and CAUSE. At this meeting, staff also received input from the Committee, public and various community stakeholders including property owners and managers, and real estate association professionals. Based on the consensus received, staff amended the draft ordinance as described within this staff report. The Community Services, Public Safety, Housing & Development Committee approved the ordinance as amended, 3-0 on March 25, 2025.

Prepared by: Albert Ramirez, Assistant Housing Director

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1 - Redline Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance
2. Attachment 2 - Clean Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance
3. Attachment 3 - Committee Staff Report
4. Attachment 4 - Comment Letters
5. Attachment 5 - PowerPoint Presentation

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD
ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD
ADDING ARTICLE III TO CHAPTER 27 OF THE OXNARD CITY CODE
ESTABLISHING TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT PROTECTIONS

WHEREAS, a minority of landlords are reported to employ coercive tactics such as reducing housing services, issuing eviction notices based on false grounds, threatening to contact immigration authorities or refusing to conduct repairs required by law, in order to induce tenants to vacate their rent stabilized units; and

WHEREAS, several jurisdictions such as Santa Monica, West Hollywood, Oakland, San Jose and Los Angeles have seen similar trends, resulting in the adoption of tenant anti-harassment ordinances; and

WHEREAS, the City Council determines to adopt the proposed tenant anti-harassment protections ordinance intended to make it clear that an owner can't engage in harassment of any tenant of a residential rental housing unit; and

WHEREAS, specifically defining prohibited tenant harassment will help to put landlords and tenants on notice of their rights and obligations and may prevent harassment, including that which escalates to tenants being forced to move.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Part 1. A new Article III. – “Tenant Anti-Harassment Protections” is added to Chapter 27 of the City Code to read as follows:

“Article III – TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT PROTECTIONS

27-40 TENANT HARASSMENT PROHIBITED.

No person renting out residential real property, including the owner of such real property or the owner's agent, property manager or representative, or master tenant renting to a subtenant shall, with respect to property used as a residential rental unit under any rental agreement or other tenancy or estate at will, however created, engage in harassment of any tenant of a residential rental housing unit.

27-41 DEFINITIONS.

A. Housing Service. Housing services include, but are not limited to, hot and cold water, heat, electricity, gas, refrigeration, elevator service, window shades and screens, storage, kitchen, bath and laundry facilities and privileges, janitor services, refuse removal, furnishings, telephone, parking, effective waterproofing and weather protection, painting, and any other benefit, privilege

or facility that has been provided by the landlord to the tenant with use or occupancy of any rental housing unit. Services to a rental housing unit shall include a proportionate part of services provided to common facilities of the building in which the rental housing unit is contained.

B. Owner. An owner, lessor, sublessor, or any other person entitled to receive rent for the use and occupancy of any rental housing unit, or an agent, representative or successor of any of the foregoing.

C. Rental Housing Agreement. An agreement, oral or written or implied, between a landlord and tenant for use or occupancy of residential real property.

D. Tenant. A tenant, subtenant, lessee, sublessee or any other person entitled under the terms of a rental housing agreement to the use or occupancy of any rental housing unit.

27-42 PROHIBITION OF TENANT HARASSMENT.

A. Forms of harassment prohibited include, but are not limited to, the following conduct done with an intent to vex, annoy, injure, or intimidate a tenant:

1. A reduction or elimination of housing services as the term “housing service” is defined in this Article.

2. A reduction of maintenance or failure to perform and timely complete necessary repairs or maintenance as set forth by contract or by State, County or local housing, health or safety laws.

3. Abusing the right of access into a rental housing unit as established and limited by California Civil Code Section 1954. This includes:

(i) entries for pretextual inspections that are not related to necessary repairs or services;

(ii) entries or notices to enter that are excessive in number in violation of California Civil Code Section 1954;

(iii) entries that improperly target certain tenants or are used to collect evidence against the tenant for the purpose of finding a reason to terminate the tenant's tenancy;

(iv) entries that interfere with a tenant's right to privacy, including, but not limited to, entering or photographing portions of a rental housing unit that are beyond the scope of a lawful entry or inspection; or

(v) entries outside of normal business hours, which are defined as 7 AM to 7 PM, Monday through Friday, Saturdays 8 AM to 12 PM, except in cases of emergency or when the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises, entry may not be made during other than normal business hours unless the tenant consents to an entry during other than normal business hours at the time of entry;

(vi) entries beyond the scope of an otherwise lawful entry.

4. Engaging in abusive conduct toward a tenant through the use of words which are offensive and inherently likely to provoke an immediate violent reaction.
5. Enticing a tenant to vacate a rental housing unit through an intentional misrepresentation(s) or the concealment of a material fact.
6. Threatening a tenant, by word or gesture, with physical harm.
7. Misrepresenting to a tenant that the tenant is required to vacate a rental housing unit.
8. Failing to exercise due diligence in performing and completing repairs to a rental housing unit after obtaining possession of the unit for the purpose of performing the repairs.
9. Engaging in an activity prohibited by federal, state or local law which prohibits housing discrimination on any basis including but not limited to sexual orientation, race, color, sex, ancestry, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, age, marital status, familial status, parenthood, pregnancy, disability, medical condition, occupancy by a minor child, or citizenship.
10. Threatening to terminate a tenancy, recover possession of a rental unit, or evict a tenant from a rental unit without a proper factual and legal basis. This subsection shall not apply to communications and conduct that are made in connection with actual pending litigation or litigation preparation, including any communications and conduct subject to Civil Code section 47 in conjunction with the "good faith" requirements stated in *Action Apartment Assn., Inc. v. City of Santa Monica* (2007) 41 Cal.4th 1232.
11. Engaging in any act or omission which interferes with the tenant's right to use and enjoy the rental unit.
12. Refusing to acknowledge or accept receipt of lawful rent payments as set forth in the lease agreement or as established by the usual practice of the parties.
13. Engaging in any act or omission constituting a disturbance of a tenant's possession of rental premises, whereby the premises are rendered unfit for occupancy, or the tenant is deprived of the beneficial enjoyment of the premises.
14. Engaging in construction or renovations at a property that creates conditions designed to encourage any tenant to vacate their rental unit.
15. Prohibiting entry by the tenant into a tenant's unit absent a judicial order permitting repossession by the landlord.
16. Inquiring as to the immigration or citizenship status of a tenant, prospective additional tenant, occupant, or prospective additional occupant of a rental unit, or requiring any of these people to make any statement, representation, or certification concerning their immigration or citizenship

status, or disclosing or threatening to disclose to any person or entity information regarding the immigration or citizenship status of any of the foregoing individuals.

17. Interfering with a tenant's right to privacy, including, but not limited to, using cameras to view the interior of a tenant's rental unit, requesting information regarding residency or citizenship status, or requesting a Social Security number, except as authorized by law.

18. Retaliating, threatening, or interfering with tenant organizing activities, including forming or participating in tenant associations or unions, or for engaging in other political activities.

19. Retaliating against or threatening a tenant for inquiring with, or seeking assistance from, a government or social services agency.

B. The conduct described in paragraph (A) of this section shall not include conduct intended to communicate ideas or beliefs to the public at large which has only an incidental effect upon a person or persons.

27-43 PENALTIES.

A. Criminal Prosecution. Violation of this Article is a misdemeanor and may be prosecuted as such by the City. Upon conviction, any violator shall be punished by a fine of not greater than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or by imprisonment in the County Jail for not more than six months, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

B. Civil Action for Damages. Any person, including the City, may enforce the provisions of this Article by means of a civil action. Any person or entity violating any of the provisions of this Article is liable for each and every such offense for actual damages suffered by the aggrieved party, or for statutory damages in the sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00), whichever is greater, and for punitive damages, and shall be liable for attorneys' fees and costs. Any person or entity violating any of the provisions of this section is liable for additional statutory damages in the sum of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) for each and every such offense if the aggrieved party is a senior citizen or disabled tenant when any of the harassing conduct occurred.

C. Injunctive Relief. Any person who commits an act, proposes to commit an act, or engages in any pattern and practice which violates this Article may be enjoined therefrom by any court of competent jurisdiction. An action for injunction under this subsection may be brought by an aggrieved person, by the City Attorney, or by any person or entity who will fairly and adequately represent the interest harmed tenant or tenants.

D. Remedies Not Exclusive. The remedies provided in this Article are not exclusive, and nothing in this section shall preclude any person from seeking any other remedies, penalties or procedures provided by law."

Part 2. Severability. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, part or portion of this Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision will not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

The City Council declares that it would have adopted this Ordinance and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, part or portion thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more section, subsections, sentences, clauses, phrases, parts or portions be declared invalid or unconstitutional.

Part 3. Pursuant to Cal. Gov. Code Section 36933(c)(1), the City Attorney was designated to prepare, and the City Clerk published, a summary of this ordinance, and a certified copy of the ordinance was posted in the Office of the City Clerk a minimum of five days before the City Council's adoption of the ordinance.

Part 4. Within fifteen days after passage, the City Clerk shall cause this ordinance to be published one time in a newspaper of general circulation, published and circulated in the City. Ordinance No. ____ was first read on _____, 2025, and finally adopted on _____, 2025, to become effective thirty days thereafter.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Luis Mc Arthur, Mayor

ATTEST:

Lourdes A. Lopez, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Stephen M. Fischer, City Attorney

Housing Department's Efforts to Combat Housing Discrimination

Brenda Lopez, Interim Director
Housing Department

Community Relations Commission
May 19, 2025



1. One of the Housing Department's key programs is supporting the enforcement of federal and state fair housing laws that make it illegal for people and entities that provide housing from discriminating against or harassing tenants, homeowners, residents, their guests, and homebuyers because of a protected characteristic.
2. Protected characteristics can include, but are not limited to: gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship, immigration status or religion.
3. These laws apply to most providers of housing and services related to housing, such as landlords, tenant screening companies, real estate agents, home sellers, builders, lenders and housing authorities.
4. In an effort to adhere to these laws, the City of Oxnard has partnered with the County of Ventura to contract with the Housing Rights Center (HRC) for fair housing services.
5. Annually, the County of Ventura contracts with HRC for \$94,280 with the City of Oxnard contributing \$25,548 towards the contract, using funding from its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant program

6. Under the County contract HRC provides three core services to all of Ventura County, including the City of Oxnard.
 7. Fair Housing Client Services - Offer a toll free telephone number for fair housing inquiries, investigate alleged cases of fair housing law violations, and when needed seek remedial action.
 8. Outreach - Prepare, reproduce and distribute flyers and materials, coordinate public service announcements and advertisements, deliver presentations to landlords, property managers and tenants.
 9. Training - Train government agencies and affordable housing provider staff on fair housing laws.
 10. From the period of July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024, HRC assisted 9 Oxnard residents with inquiries of discrimination and counseled 48 residents on various tenant issues. Of the discrimination inquiries, only 2 cases were opened, with one being closed for inconclusive evidence and the other still under investigation.
 11. The City of Oxnard's partnership with the County of Ventura and its contract with HRC, continues to play a vital role in combating housing discrimination.
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PROPOSED TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT ORDINANCE

1. In recent months, the Oxnard City Council has received testimony from numerous tenants expressing concerns about harassment and retaliation they've endured due to complaints they've filed with the City's Code Enforcement and/or Rent Stabilization & Just Cause Eviction Divisions. In response to the testimony, City Council directed the Housing Department to bring forward an Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance to address these issues plaguing the community.
2. On April 29, 2025, the Housing Department brought forth the first reading of the Tenant-Anti Harassment Ordinance for City Council's consideration, which passed on a 6-1 vote.

PROPOSED TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT ORDINANCE (CONTINUED)

3. Under the proposed ordinance, prohibited harassment can include, but is not limited to the following:
 - a) Reduction or elimination of housing services, such as cutting off of electricity, gas, and water.
 - b) Failure to complete repairs/maintenance.
 - c) Abuse of the right of entry to the premises.
 - d) Engaging in discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, color, sex, ancestry, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, age, marital status, familial status, parenthood, pregnancy, disability, medical condition, occupancy by a minor child, or citizenship.
 - e) Refusal to acknowledge or accept receipt rental payments.
 - f) Inquiring as to the immigration or citizenship status of a tenant or threatening to disclose their status.
 - g) Retaliating, threatening, or interfering with a tenants right to engage in political activities, retaliating against and/or threatening a tenant for inquiring or seeking assistance from a government or social services agency.

PROPOSED TENANT ANTI-HARASSMENT ORDINANCE (CONTINUED)

4. Violations under the proposed ordinance are a misdemeanor and may be criminally prosecuted by the City. Based on the experience of other jurisdictions with similar ordinances, only the most egregious cases are prosecuted as violations of tenant anti-harassment laws.
5. The ordinance also allows an aggrieved tenant, the City, or an organization to pursue civil action for damages and the recovery of attorney fees. The ordinance would apply citywide to all residential tenancies.
6. Adoption of the proposed ordinance would be ineffective without adequate staffing and resources to enforce the ordinance. Based on research with other cities, to launch a citywide program at least two (2) positions are necessary: one (1) partially dedicated Assistant City Attorney and one (1) fully dedicated Housing Investigator.
7. The two positions necessary to enforce the proposed ordinance were requested as part of the FY 25-26 budget. If the positions are approved, staff will return to the City Council on June 26, 2025, for a second reading of the proposed ordinance, which if approved, would cause the ordinance to be in effect 30 days thereafter.



End of Presentation