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MOTION

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

1537-1541 W. Cambria St was an apartment complex that embodied L.A.'s robust cultural heritage. The complex housed 45 tenants, 12 of whom were children, and all tenants shared a common indigenous language, with Spanish as a second language for many. Many of the families had lived there for over 20 years. The residents were classified as extremely-low-income, paying only \$1,700 per month for three and four bedroom units.

877 N. Bunker Hill Ave encompassed 20 units filled with long-time tenants, of whom the overwhelming majority were low-income, monolingual Chinese language speaking, seniors. Making their homes in Chinatown was not simply a matter of preference, but a matter of necessity as it is the only neighborhood in the City that was truly language-accessible to them.

Within the last year, both of these buildings caught fire, rendering them entirely uninhabitable and leaving the residents without a place to live. In the case of 1537-1541 W. Cambria, the building was soon demolished and most tenants received almost no compensation. For the tenants of 877 N. Bunker Hill, since September 13, 2024 they have been living in motels during the long search for suitable long term housing, with affordability and proximity to Chinatown being some of the key challenges. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, these vulnerable seniors - some with serious medical conditions - were sleeping in cots at Alpine Recreation Center. Unfortunately, these are not uncommon stories.

While Los Angeles does not keep comprehensive records of how many tenants are displaced due to disaster or how many are eligible for a right to return, there are countless examples of individuals facing massive disruptions to their daily lives because of fires and other Acts of God and communities of color bear the brunt of these risks. Across Los Angeles County, the communities that are most at risk of catastrophic fire, flood, or other natural disasters tend to be lower income and less white than the county as a whole. Black residents in Los Angeles County are at higher risk for receiving catastrophic levels of floodwater, and they are 79% more likely than white residents to live in areas at risk of at least three feet of flooding.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council INSTRUCT the Los Angeles Housing Department (LAHD) and REQUEST the City Attorney, to report within 30 days on potential amendments, additions and changes to the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), as well as exploring a new ordinance to establish the following protections for all residential tenants who are displaced temporarily or have their tenancy unilaterally terminated due to earthquake, fire, flood, natural disaster, civil disturbance, or other Acts of God. The report should consult stakeholder organizations, including tenant advocacy groups and landlords. Specifically, the report should include an analysis and recommendations, including specific model amendments to the current LAMC and/or a draft ordinance, that assess the following guidelines:

- Requiring property owners who seek to renovate, rebuild, or restore a unit after an earthquake, fire, flood, natural disaster, civil disturbance, or other Acts of God to comply with a Tenant Habitability Plan and to observe full compliance with all requirements set forth in the Tenant Habitability Plan Ordinance;
- Providing a displaced tenant whose contract has been terminated for the above-mentioned reasons the right of first return to their original unit, once repaired, if the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO) or Just Cause Ordinance applies;
- Requiring property owners to provide relocation assistance to tenants who are permanently displaced pursuant to the tenant protection scheme in place prior to the displacement, and if none exists, then provide it at a rate recommended by LAHD and the City Attorney, in alignment with other City laws;

NOV 19 2024

- Subjecting property owners who do not comply with the above rules to an enforcement scheme overseen by LAHD and the City Attorney that includes fines, fees, and a private right of action for tenants with a mandatory attorneys' fees clause for prevailing parties.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council INSTRUCT LAHD to report in 30 days on the following:

- Existing remedies in the LAMC that support relocation assistance for tenants who have been affected by an Act of God;
- Where in the LAMC there is coverage to ensure that tenant habitability is up to code, and how a tenant can file for recourse should a landlord be unresponsive to necessary building updates;
- In the event that a landlord or property owner's negligence is not found to be the cause of damage during an Act of God, what mechanisms exist for tenants to provide counter evidence.

PRESENTED BY: _____

EUNISSES HERNANDEZ
Councilmember, 1st District

SECONDED BY: _____

Heath Hull

ORIGINAL