

Greenfield City Council Resolution in Support of "An Act Enabling Cities and Towns to Stabilize Rents and Protect Tenants" and "An Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases"

Over the last decade, the Greenfield City Council has borne witness to an explosive rise in housing costs. In an environment where demand for both owner-occupied and rental housing far outstrips supply, landlords have disproportionate market power over their tenants.

As a result of this dynamic, many Greenfield renters have reported to this Council that they have been victims of predatory rental market practices, which involve landlords exploiting tenants through unfair rental agreements, abrupt rent hikes, neglect of repairs, and unfair eviction tactics. All of these practices have led to financial hardship and housing instability for Greenfield's renters, have left many of our long-term renters displaced, and have put some Greenfield renters in the position of choosing rent over food and utilities.

WHEREAS, the Greenfield City Council is calling on the Commonwealth to pass H.2328 and S.1447: "An Act Enabling Cities and Towns to Stabilize Rents and Protect Tenants," sponsored by Sen. Patricia Jehlen, Sen. Adam Gomez, Rep. David Rogers, and Rep. Samantha Montañó, to repeal rent control preemptions, enabling cities to enact rent stabilization and "Just Cause" eviction protections for tenants, while building in exemptions fit for the local context; and

WHEREAS, The Greenfield City Council supports the Keep Massachusetts Home coalition's effort to place a rent stabilization measure on the November 2026 statewide ballot, "An Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases," proposing a cap on annual rent increases tied to the Consumer Price Index—or, in any case, not exceeding 5% per year—with exemptions for owner-occupied buildings of four or fewer units and for newly constructed buildings during their first ten years.

WHEREAS, according to U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, over 21 million renter households spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs in 2023, representing nearly half (49.7%) of the 42.5 million renter households in the United States for whom rent burden is calculated¹; and

WHEREAS, a 2020 report published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO-20-433) found that every \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% increase in homelessness²; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Census Bureau ACS estimates, in Greenfield, median rent

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023 5-Year Estimates, Table B25070

² "State of Homelessness", U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO-20-433).

has increased by \$261 (30%) between 2018 and 2024;³ and

WHEREAS, per the 2024 Greenfield Housing Plan, 24% of Greenfield households earned less than \$27,930 a year,⁴ 39% of renters in Greenfield, MA are considered cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than one-third of their income on rent and utilities, and 62% of all households in Greenfield qualify for federal and state affordable housing programs based on household income;⁵ and

WHEREAS, rents in Greenfield are rising, causing the city to become increasingly unaffordable for its residents, including low and fixed-income individuals, service and essential workers, working-class households, as well as other marginalized members of the community, including but not limited to people with accessibility needs, LGBT+, immigrants, and seniors, leading to housing displacement, lack of housing stability, and sometimes into unhoused situations, creating a growing affordability and renter crisis in the community; and

WHEREAS, the 2024 Greenfield Housing Plan shows a significant increase in both total people experiencing homelessness and the rate at which these people are in families compared to individuals;⁶ and

WHEREAS, Greenfield's population has been rapidly aging over the past decade, with the 65+ age group growing while other age groups shrink, and most households in the 65+ age group have incomes below 60% AMI,⁷ and the rising cost of living across the Commonwealth has been felt acutely in our community, especially for our low-income and senior populations; and

WHEREAS, stable rental environments with familiar neighbors are essential conditions for informal (unpaid) caregiving networks for older persons who wish to remain embedded within our community; and

WHEREAS, predatory investors are increasingly buying properties in Greenfield in the hopes of profiting from the high-demand rental market, with 18% of home sales being purchased by investors between 2000-2023;⁸ and

WHEREAS, the loss of affordable housing in Greenfield is a crisis that deeply impacts the lives of

³ U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates & 2019-2024 5-Year Estimates, Table B25064

⁴ City of Greenfield. (2024). *Greenfield Housing Plan 2024* (p. 19) [PDF]. City of Greenfield, Department of Community & Economic Development.

https://cms5.revize.com/revize/greenfield/Document_Center/Department/Community%20&%20Economic%20Development/Greenfield%20Housing%20Plan%20-%202024%20-%20FINAL.pdf

⁵ Ibid., (p. 24,19).

⁶ Ibid., (p. 26).

⁷ Ibid., (p. 17, 23).

⁸ Homes for Profit, Metropolitan Area Planning Council <https://speculative-investment-report-238dd5ba1fdb.herokuapp.com/>

our neighbors, colleagues, and friends; and

WHEREAS, the housing market should provide much-needed housing for the city, not be used as an asset for outside investors to extract wealth from the Greenfield community; and

WHEREAS the goal of rent stabilization is to address a city's affordable housing crisis by setting the maximum amount that a landlord can raise rent every year, either a fair fixed percentage or tied to the rate of inflation; and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts law currently prohibits rent control, so that Greenfield cannot address this problem without legislative action on the state level; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Greenfield City Council hereby declares its support for the rent stabilization measure, "An Initiative Petition to Protect Tenants by Limiting Rent Increases," proposed for the 2026 statewide ballot; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Greenfield City Council supports Bill H.2328 and S.1447, calling for the repeal of statewide rent control preemptions, allowing cities and towns to institute rent stabilization measures and implement tenant protections; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a copy of this resolution will be sent to the Attorney General, State Representative Susannah Whipps, the legislative office of the First Franklin District, State Senator Joanne Comerford, and the Governor of the Commonwealth.