

HCDC Sep 19, 2023 Public Comments

Kurt Mitenbuler –Just Cause – 9/19/23

In regards to Just Cause:

1 Tenants are hurt by Just Cause because it makes it difficult for bad tenants to be removed from the building. Everyone is familiar with the neighbor who parties until all hours, or smokes in the non-smoking building, etc. If the party guys are allowed to stay, all the good tenants will move out. Thus Just Cause forces the quality tenant to leave while rewarding the bad actors.

2 Just Cause hurts the small landlord the most – because the small player cannot afford to have everyone in their building move out. Thus, only big players (or hedge funds) will have the deep pockets necessary to invest in Evanston.

a Small players will sell their single family homes or small rental buildings to someone who wants to own or deconvert these buildings. This removes housing stock from the rental market, thereby driving up prices.

b Similarly, it makes Evanston a bad place to start a real estate career. Real estate is one of the tried-and-true ways for a middle class person to build generational wealth. They buy a starter home, they reach a point where they can trade up to a bigger house, and then they lease out their old home. Gives them ownership over two houses. If this newbie to real estate can't control who they rent to, they are unlikely to pursue such a path in Evanston. Instead, they'll just sell their old house when they trade up.

3 Its bad for development. Evanston is a 75,000 person town in a 9 million person metro area. Wilmette and Skokie are NOT doing Just Cause. Nor is any other North Shore suburb. Chicago's ordinance has been bottled up in committee for 2 years. If Evanston moves forward in isolation, development will move to other communities that are more pro real estate. How livable will Evanston be without development?

Cheryl Lawrence, Open Communities – Just Cause - In Favor - 9/19/23

Housing and Community Development Committee Members,

My name is Cheryl Lawrence, and I live in Evanston, my spouse and I work in Evanston and my daughter attends ETHS. I am writing in favor of Just Cause as a resident and also as an advocate that has been working with tenants for many years-- first in legal services and now as the director at Open Communities.

I have seen the devastating effects of tenants losing their home through no fault of their own and the lasting effects it has on the whole family. Housing instability is getting incredibly insidious and is a strong social determinant of health. Especially, today the reasons people are losing their housing has more to do with profit than any other reason. This is wrong. I am also writing as a resident of Evanston who lives in this community because of its vibrant diversity and we are losing way too much affordable housing.

We need to protect what makes Evanston special and that means there needs to be room for everyone and Evanston residents deserve to feel stable in their own homes, and not be forced to move for little to no reason at all. As the Housing and Community Development Committee considers updates to Evanston's Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance (RLTO), I urge the committee to consider the opportunity we have to make a more just and equitable rental landscape in our city.

In Evanston, 43% of residents rent, and with rents up 17%, low- and moderate-income residents are facing high housing cost burdens and an ever-present risk of displacement. Tenants often think of this kind of instability in their housing as part and parcel of the rental landscape. Just Cause for Eviction will increase fairness and transparency in the landlord/tenant relationship and will offer dignity and resources to those displaced through no fault of their own. We commend the work of the Just Cause Task Force to shape a proposal to bring back to this committee for swift passage. Displacement is often traumatic and can lead to health issues, housing instability, and even homelessness; families are uprooted from their neighborhoods, school systems, and burdened with unexpected financial strain.

Without requiring "good" or "just" cause, housing providers are free to end the relationship when no violation has taken place, for arbitrary or even discriminatory reasons. By requiring disclosure and limiting housing providers' ability to evict a tenant or non-renew a lease to a set of "good causes," our community will show that it values those who rent by conferring them greater opportunities to maintain what is an essential human need. Relocation assistance requirements will begin to address the costs of sudden, no-fault displacement.

Evanston is a leader in the region, and in fact, across the country, because of its commitment to human rights and inclusion. I encourage this committee to continue us on that path.

Thank you for allowing the chance to comment.

Cheryl Lawrence, Open Communities.

Sarah Buckley, Open Communities – Just Cause - In Favor - 9/19/23

We need stronger rights for tenants. Many community members are being displaced after decades of living in their unit and paying rent on time. There should be a reason for non renewal!! Or some sort of protection for folks that are put out after so many years and live on a limited, fixed income. There should also be caps on rent increases. It is criminal that some people are given notice of a 30%+ increase.

Valerie J. Phillips - Cannabis Smoking in No Smoking Buildings - 8/4/23

Evanston needs to ban all smoking in multi-use apartments. I moved 616 Sheridan Road in Evanston in March of 2023. I have asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and am a cancer survivor. I specifically asked if this was a no smoking building. I was told there was no smoking in the building and it says "no smoking in the building" in my lease. That same month, marijuana smoke from neighbors seeped out from their apartment into the common areas (front hallway and back stairway) into my apartment. Getting through the front hallway is like running a gauntlet. I routinely wear a KN-95 mask just to get through the hallways. I have been put on a steroid inhaler, had to purchase a medical-grade air purifier, call the nonEmergency Community Police (Sargeant Chelsea Brown), called Property Maintenance (who ending up citing the landlord), provided a doctor's letter to my landlord, contacted the landlord over and over again, asked the smoker(s) to stop through signs, barricaded myself in my own apartment, letters slipped under doors, suggested they switch to edibles, and knocking on the door of the smoker. They continue to smoke cannabis and fill the common areas with that smoke, which then seeps into my apartment through my front and back door and fills my living space for hours. The landlord does not have an incentive to enforce the lease and evict this person for repeatedly violating the lease or they would have done it months ago. Their priority is having paying renters in this building. I have limited mobility and just got here, yet I have to find another place to live for my health. In the meantime, my health is being undermined. The City of Evanston should not put the health of its residents in the hands of profit-seeking landlords. The nature of smoke is that it seeps in everywhere. Please ban smoking in multi-unit apartments.

Valerie J. Phillips - Avidor Bullying Tactics - 8/4/23

I was a resident of the Avidor for one year. I moved out in March of 2023 after The Avidor raised my rent approximately 40% and would not compromise on a lower rent while I searched for a new apartment elsewhere that I could afford in Evanston. My comments have to do with the bullying tactics Avidor uses against tenants in difficult circumstances. Avidor has charged me a \$550 move-out fee for cleaning a one-bedroom less than 600 square feet apartment. When I disputed this, noting that

hiring a maid service would only cost about \$100-\$120 and told them I had videos and photos of the condition of my apartment upon move-out, Avidor then switched to claiming that I owed them \$350.00 instead for "pet odor." There was no pet odor in my apartment. I have two cats and they never soiled the sole place that there is carpeting (in the bedroom). I offered to pay them \$100.00 for the cleaning, which they refused. Sawsan Rizkallah, an Avidor employee, explained that the "pet odor" was because my cats "walked on the carpet," not because of any actual soiling of the carpet. Avidor is attempting to ruin my credit rating over a fraudulent "pet odor" claim and it is costing my time and money to get them to stop the harassment. I would also like to note that Avidor was clearly reducing amenities in that building shortly before I moved out against residents who negotiated and paid for access to those amenities when they first moved in. Very dishonest. I have also since found articles from Ireland complaining about Greystar Realty's predatory tactics being almost single-handedly responsible for ruining the housing market in that country for modest-income renters like myself.