



Leah Simon-Weisberg, Chair, Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board

Memo

January 20, 2022

To: Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board

From: Chair Leah Simon-Weisberg, Commissioner Paola Laverde, Commissioner Mari Mendonca

Subject: Land acknowledgment for the Rent Board to be read at the start of every meeting and exploration of other possible actions to support indigenous people of Berkeley.

Overview

Hundreds of institutions across the country have begun including land acknowledgements at the beginning of their meetings. The acknowledgement requires each community to take institutional time to remember the devastation upon which our cities were established and be consistently reminded that this land was stolen and the indigenous people of Berkeley are still here with us. Here is an article talking about the growing number of cities considering land acknowledgements.

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/03/17/growing-number-of-cities-weigh-tribal-land-acknowledgements> We are also including a link to the Lisjan Ohlone History & Territory - <https://sogoreate-landtrust.org/lisjan-history-and-territory/> and encourage commissioners to read the history of the land and of the indigenous people who remain here in Berkeley.

Proposed Land Acknowledgment Before Starting a Meeting:

The Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board recognizes that the rental housing units we regulate are built on the territory of xučyun (Huchiun-(Hooch-yoon)), the ancestral and

unceded land of the Chochenyo (Cho-Chen-yo) speaking Ohlone (Oh-low-nee) people, the ancestors and descendants of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to all of the-Ohlone Tribes and descendants of the Verona Band. As we begin our meeting tonight, we acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of Berkeley, the documented 5,000 year history of a vibrant community at the West Berkeley Shellmound, and the Ohlone people who continue to reside in the East Bay.

We recognize that Berkeley's landlords and tenants have and continue to benefit from the use and occupation of this unceded stolen land since the City of Berkeley's incorporation in 1878 and since the Rent Stabilization Board's creation in 1980. As stewards of the laws regulating rental housing, it is not only vital that we recognize the history of this land, but also recognize that the Ohlone people are present members of Berkeley and other East Bay communities today.

Concrete Policy Goals to Work Collaboratively with the Indigenous Community:

The Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board recognizes that acknowledgement of the land and the people that it has always had relationships with is not enough, and that land acknowledgments should be living documents that provide an opportunity to build working relationships with the Ohlone people.

Below is a list of possible further actions that could be taken. We would like to provide these as potential opportunities as a preview. We believe it would be helpful to refer to the outreach committee to discuss and propose possible action for the next board meeting.

- Co-Sponsor with Ohlone leaders educational webinars for landlords and tenants on meeting Climate Crisis Goals: water conservation, limiting fossil fuels, community caretaking, local sourcing food, etc.
- Consult with local Indigenous leaders when implementing policies that expand or alter housing (Demolition Ordinance, Relocation, ADUs)
- Pursue equity and diversity by recruiting, hiring and promoting Indigenous/Native people in permanent employment and UC Berkeley internships
- Annual webinar and outreach materials for November each year celebrating Native American Month

- Continue to participate in the City's Annual Indigenous People's Day Pow-Wow by tabling every year in October
- Ensure Rent Board materials are inclusive year-round to reflect racial and ethnic diversity in the City of Berkeley
- Encourage the Berkeley City Council to include a similar land acknowledgment before starting each meeting
- Encourage the Berkeley Public School District to include a land acknowledgment before each meeting, and include Ohlone history and current day community in K-12 curriculum

Recommendation

1. Move to include the inclusion at the beginning of each agenda. It shall be included in writing and read aloud at the beginning of each meeting.
2. Refer to Outreach Committee to further develop steps that the rent board can take to show support and build a working relationship with the Ohlone.
3. Share Rent Board Land Acknowledgement on website and board social media.