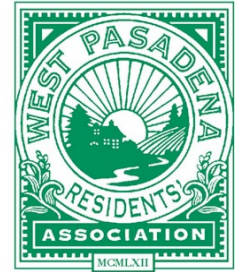


November 15, 2017

Via E-Mail

To:

Mayor Terry Tornek
Pasadena City Council
City Manager Steve Mermell



Re: **Caltrans Houses in the 710 Corridor**

Dear Mayor Tornek, Pasadena City Council members, and City Manager Mermell:

The West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA) is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the character and quality of life of southwest Pasadena and the city of Pasadena. The WPRA represents over 7,000 households, in an area that includes all of the Pasadena properties owned by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the 710 Corridor.

First, the WPRA is very concerned about the state of the Caltrans properties in the corridor. Many have been vacant for years and have fallen into a dangerous state of disrepair. Besides being an eyesore, these properties are a public nuisance because they are a target for vagrants and drug users and a fire hazard to the surrounding neighborhood. Our research indicates there are at least 20 vacant properties on and around South Pasadena Avenue (out of 103 Caltrans-owned homes in Pasadena), many of them historic. In addition, many of the Caltrans' properties (both occupied and vacant) are in violation of city codes, yet Pasadena does not appear to be making a significant effort to correct the violations. Some houses have illegally sealed off areas, for example. Please see attached for photos of some of these vacant properties. More photos can be seen at goo.gl/p6bMLX

The WPRA is also concerned by what appears to be a clear pattern of Caltrans attempting to depopulate the corridor of its low to moderate income tenants. For the past few years, Caltrans has been raising tenants' rents by 10% every six months until their rent reaches an undefined "fair market rent." According to the Caltrans Tenants Association, at least 52 tenants have been priced out of their homes and have had to move.

In addition, Caltrans is presently pursuing the evictions of at least eight tenants for what our information indicates are unfair, trivial, resolvable reasons. According to the Caltrans Tenants Association, at least two tenants have been evicted already. The common connection between these tenants is that they qualify to purchase their homes at an "affordable rate" through the ongoing surplus sales process under the Roberti Bill, and they have expressed a desire to purchase their home to Caltrans District 7 staff.

It therefore appears that Caltrans is attempting to evict or price out as many of these low to moderate income tenants as possible before the properties are declared surplus so that Caltrans can then sell the empty homes at market value. If so, Caltrans is engaging in a bad-faith attack on the Roberti Bill, and violating the statutory rights of tenants (Pasadena residents) who

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qualify to purchase their homes at an affordable price but do not possess the resources to fight back against Caltrans. Some of these tenants have lived in and cared for these homes, to the best of their ability, literally for decades. Now they are being driven out just as the homes are finally becoming available for purchase.

At the same time, of the total of 54 emptied homes (that we know of) throughout the 710 Corridor, only three have been re-rented. As stated above, Caltrans is creating a hazard in the buildings it has allowed to remain vacant long-term. Caltrans also neglects to do much-needed repairs on its properties, and some tenants currently live without heat, with leaking rooves, and with shoddy electricity. It therefore appears that not only is Caltrans violating the rights of low to moderate income Pasadena residents, and creating hazardous conditions in our city, Caltrans is also shooting itself in the foot economically by destroying the value of structures it owns.

We urge you to 1) cite Caltrans for code violations, and 2) hold a public hearing at the soonest possible City Council meeting to gather information and hear from tenants and stakeholders about the code violations, unfair evictions, rent increases, lack of repairs, and other local public nuisances. Please step forward in defense of these constituents. Many if not most of the tenants lack significant financial resources, and we believe they have fallen victim to the Caltrans bureaucracy. Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kenyon Harbison

Kenyon Harbison
President, West Pasadena Residents' Association

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