Housing Programs

Voluntary Rental Guidelines
For Residential Rental Owners, Managers and Tenants

A Program of the City of Monterey Housing Programs Office

A collaborative effort for community-based solutions by:

City of Monterey

Individual Managers and Property Owners

Renter Advocates
INTRODUCTION

In collaboration with landlords, property managers, renters and renter advocates, the following document serves as suggested guidelines between landlords/property managers and their respective tenants. The purpose of the Voluntary Guidelines is to provide both the owner/manager and renters with reasonable expectations between each party. The Guidelines are meant to assist owners/managers and tenants toward fair and reasonable resolution of issues regarding a variety of rental-related issues such as:

- Reasonable Rent Increases not to exceed 10% maximum
- 60-Day Rent Increase Notices
- One Annual Rent Adjustment
- Longer-Term Leases
- Consideration for Good & Long Term Tenants
- Consideration of Tenant Hardships
- Communication, Openness, Availability, Responsiveness
- Property Maintenance/Habitability
- Mediation to Resolve Disputes
- Quality Service to Tenants (Customer Satisfaction)
- Resident Managers and On-Site Emissary

For Landlord-Tenant issues please contact:

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This booklet contains a reference to a handbook produced by the State of California Department of Consumers Affairs: “California Tenants, A Guide to Residential Tenants’ and Landlords’ Rights and Responsibilities.” This is a comprehensive publication that addresses many renter/landlord issues, and is provided for your reference (see website www.dca.ca.gov).
OWNER/MANAGER VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

While there may be individual circumstances under which these guidelines cannot be followed, the following voluntary guidelines are approved by the Monterey City Council and recommended for use by residential property managers and owners:

1. Keep rent increases reasonable and below 10% maximum for your residents. A variety of factors should be considered when determining what is reasonable. These factors include, but are not limited to the following items, which should be considered collectively, not individually:
   - Maintenance and operating cost
   - Capital improvements & debt service
   - Provision of housing services
   - Return on investment to property owner
   - Utility costs
   - Rent history of tenant
   - Local Area Consumer Price Index (CPI)
   - Period of time resident has lived at the property
   - Existing market value of rents for similarly-situated units

2. Give your residents predictability and the opportunity to plan ahead.
   - Provide at least 60 days notice for all rent adjustments.
   - Adopt a policy of one annual rent adjustment.
   - Offer your residents the option of longer-term leases instead of short-term rental agreements.

3. Recognize the value of long-term, stable residents, who pay their rent on time.
   a) Phase-in the rent adjustment to accommodate a hardship request by a resident.
   b) If your monthly rent for existing residents is significantly below market-rate, increase rents over an extended period of time, bearing in mind the residents’ history at your property, and realizing that rents will increase to market as units turn-over.

4. Attach a sensitively written letter to your notice of rent adjustment.
   a) Point out any increased operational costs such as taxes, utilities, maintenance, and debt service.
   b) Highlight upcoming or recent improvements to the property.
   c) If available, provide information on comparable rents.

5. Be open, available and responsive when residents want to discuss their rent adjustment.
   a) Be knowledgeable about their rent history at your property.
   b) Be willing to listen to them openly and consider special arrangements, such as a phased-in rent adjustment for hardship cases.
6. Keep your property maintained.
   a) Provide residents with a method to report repairs, damages or conditions that need to be corrected.
   b) Respond to maintenance requests as soon as possible.
   c) Attend to all maintenance requests within 30 days. If not possible due to unforeseen circumstances, please provide clear communication as to why and include an estimated timeframe of when the repair will be rectified.

7. Embrace voluntary, professional mediation.
   a) If unable to come to an agreement with a resident, request professional mediation assistance.
   b) Respond if a mediation agency calls.
   c) Enter into a mediation discussion.

8. Be sensitive to the fact there may be circumstances that result in residents voluntarily vacating your property.
   a) If requested, attempt to help them find suitable housing in other units you may own or manage.
   b) If a resident is forced to break a lease in the middle of a lease term, work with them to quickly fill the unit and minimize the expense to the resident who is leaving.
   c) As soon as practical, and within the guidelines prescribed by law, account for and return the residents’ security deposit.

9. Consider how your actions concerning adjusting rents may affect public perception of you, your company and the rental housing industry. You are in the business of providing housing, and your residents are your customers. As in any business, you should strive as much as possible to satisfy your customers at all times, which is the foundation for business success.

10. In an effort to reduce tenant costs, partner with other local owners/managers to share application and credit check information.

11. Ensure that your resident managers are well briefed on your commitment to these guidelines and that they follow through as your on-site emissary.

**TENANT VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES**

1. Provide open and clear communication to owner/manager on all matters.
2. Be open and understanding to possible rent increases. If an increase creates a hardship, contact owner/manager to better learn why the increase was issued and if there are accommodations available.
3. Consider suggesting longer term rental agreements.
4. Treat your residence as if you owned it – maintain cleanliness, obey all requirements of the rental agreement, and be a respectful neighbor.
5. Report all repair and/or maintenance issues as soon as possible.
6. If you disagree with an action by the owner/manager, please contact that person as soon as possible to engage in an open and polite conversation.
7. If unable to come to agreement with owner/manager, request professional mediation assistance.
8. Request application and/or credit information be shared amongst various owners/managers, if applying for multiple residences.

These voluntary guidelines are suggestions for the property manager, owners and tenant’s use in their absolute and unqualified discretion. None of the above suggestions are mandatory.

Drafted in a collaborative effort between individual Managers and Property Owners, renter advocates, and the City of Monterey.

Landlords and Tenants are encouraged to read and refer to the publication by the State of California entitled CALIFORNIA TENANTS- A Guide to Residential Tenants’ and Landlords’ Rights and Responsibilities. This publication is available in English and Spanish language versions on the Internet at the State of California Department of Consumers Affairs’ homepage at www.dca.ca.gov.

The approved and adopted versions of these Guidelines and all program materials will be made available in English and Spanish languages. The City of Monterey Housing Office and The Conflict Resolution and Mediation Center will also maintain subscriptions to the Language Line Service or its equivalent, to provide these services to Monterey residents in all available languages.

The City Of Monterey does not discriminate against persons with disabilities, minorities, or other disadvantaged persons or groups. Any inquiries as to how these persons may receive assistance in obtaining information and/or services related to the City’s Housing and Community Development (HCD) Programs should contact the Housing & Property Management Office at 831-646-3995.