

As the South King County community organizer and tenants' rights educator, Burien was the first city I began organizing in. February of 2018, I met with Mayor Jimmy Matta sharing with him my witness to the discrimination and displacement Burien residents, especially immigrants and those of color, were subjected to, because of the lack of tenant protections. In the process of drafting and organizing for a stronger tenant protections, a year ago Burien witnessed the horrific displacement of majority low income, people of color, elders and disabled residents from Fox Cove.

Residents from Fox Cove reached out the Tenants Union for advice and advocacy to protect themselves from homelessness. The former landlord, who neglected all repair requests, had tenants in inhabitable living conditions. Due to fear of retaliation and eviction, many of the residents did not continue to press for repairs.

Without a warning the landlord sold the building to a developer who gave them all a no cause, 20 day termination of tenancy notice, leaving them with only 20 day to find somewhere else to live, in the middle of the winter, right before the holidays.

Fox Cove tenants organized and demanded the City of Burien and City Council protect them from displacement or potential homeless. This was especially triggering to residents who had experienced homeless in the past. Since there weren't any tenant protections already in place at the time, Burien city council couldn't legally enforce a stop to displacement. However, they were able to pass an emergency relocation assistance fund, which helped alleviate the costs of rehousing. Although many residents had to leave their beloved community and children their schools and friends.

From the ashes of the demolition of Fox Cove, tenants, teachers, pastors among other community members organized and demanded the city for strong tenant protections.

The City of Burien held a few community meetings to hear the concerns and suggestions, then created a Rental Housing Policy packet based on the summary of community feedback.

After countless hours and months of community organizing, flyering, tenants telling their stories and pressuring city council –

On October 7th, Burien City Council Unanimously passed

Just Cause Eviction, protecting families from homelessness, retaliation, discrimination and displacement.

Making Burien the first city of Washington State in 40 years to pass Just Cause outside of Seattle

As well as,

- Business license requirement from Landlords
- Certificates of inspections
- Rental housing inspection program coordinator
- Distribution of information
- Deposit requirements and installment payments to be permitted
- Notice of sale of low income housing
- Housing Ombudsperson

Inhabitable living conditions, displacement, homelessness, discrimination and xenophobic threats to have ICE called for urging repairs, will not be such a strong threat to Burien tenants thanks to the unity, strength and organizing of the community.

Stories like Fox Cove, happen throughout Burien and the state of Washington, many of them silenced by fear, but together we can make these protections possible for the renters across the entire state of Washington, when we put people over profit, because housing is a human right.

Special shout out to the Burien Renters Rights Coalition and Burien City Council Member Krystal Marx.

Thank you.

In solidarity,

Julissa Sanchez