

ORDINANCE NO. 20-3

AN URGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF SANTA CLARITA, CALIFORNIA, TEMPORARILY PROHIBITING EVICTIONS
OF RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL TENANTS ARISING FROM FINANCIAL
IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency within the State of California ("State") due to the threat posed by a novel coronavirus ("COVID-19") including evidence of physical damage to property; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, the Los Angeles County Health Officer issued a Declaration of Local Health Emergency due to the introduction of COVID-19 cases to Los Angeles County; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors ("Board") concurred and issued a Proclamation ("Proclamation") declaring a local emergency within the County of Los Angeles regarding the imminent spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order that authorizes local governments to halt evictions for renters, encourages financial institutions to slow foreclosures, and protects renters and homeowners against utility shutoffs for Californians affected by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom issued an Executive Order that requires all persons to remain at home to the extent possible and requires all non-essential businesses to be closed; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors issued an Executive Order prohibiting residential and commercial evictions in the unincorporated portions of the County under certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, on March 21, 2020, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health issued a clarifying Safer at Home order, requiring all persons to remain at home to the extent possible, unless engaged in essential businesses; and

WHEREAS, on March 27, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-37-20, which created certain protections against evictions for residential tenants, but such Order did not address commercial tenants, nor did it provide as much protection for residential tenants as the County's March 19, 2020 Order, nor did it preclude adoption by local entities of protections that are greater than those set for in the Governor's Order; and

WHEREAS, businesses that are temporarily closed by the Safer at Home orders are not generating tax revenues needed for public services, and evictions and replacement of such tenants will further delay generation of tax revenues once the Safer at Home orders are lifted. Further, even businesses that continue in operation as "essential businesses" such as restaurants,

are still subject to reductions in income as a result of the “Safer at Home” orders; and

WHEREAS, California Government Code section 8630 et seq. authorizes the City to declare a local emergency, which the City Council did at an emergency meeting on March 13, 2020; and

WHEREAS, California Government Code sections 8634, 36934, and 36937 authorize the City Council to take action by ordinance to take effect immediately for the preservation of the public peace, health, or safety when adopted by a four-fifths vote of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the public health emergency and the precautions recommended by health authorities, many residential and commercial tenants in the City have experienced or expect to experience sudden and unexpected income loss soon; and

WHEREAS, further economic impacts are anticipated, leaving residential and commercial tenants potentially unable to pay rent and vulnerable to eviction; and

WHEREAS, during this local emergency, and in the interest of protecting the public health and preventing transmission of COVID-19, it is essential to avoid unnecessary housing displacement, and prevent housed individuals from falling into homelessness as well as facilitate the rapid return to business and generation of tax revenues and provision of retail services to the Santa Clarita community by commercial tenants.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA, CALIFORNIA, DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. A temporary moratorium on eviction for non-payment of rent by residential tenants, including manufactured home owners, or commercial tenants, impacted by the COVID-19 crisis is imposed as set forth herein.

SECTION 2. From March 4, 2020, through this ordinance’s expiration, as set forth herein, in response to COVID-19 no landlord shall endeavor to evict a tenant for nonpayment of rent if the tenant demonstrates that the tenant is unable to pay rent due to Financial Impacts related to COVID-19.

SECTION 3. A landlord who knows or is deemed to know that a tenant cannot pay some or all of the rent temporarily for the reasons set forth above in Section 2 shall not serve a notice pursuant to CCP 1161(2), file or prosecute an unlawful detainer action based on a 3-day pay or quit notice, or otherwise seek to evict for nonpayment of rent.

SECTION 4. A landlord shall be deemed to know of a tenant’s inability to pay rent within the meaning of this ordinance if the tenant, within seven (7) days after the date that rent is due, unless extenuating circumstances exist, notifies the landlord in writing and provides documentation, to the extent available, that the tenant is unable to pay rent due to Financial Impacts related to COVID-19. To facilitate communication between a landlord and tenant and an exploration of alternatives, the tenant is encouraged to notify the landlord of financial

hardship at the earliest opportunity. For purposes of this ordinance, “in writing” includes email or text communications to a landlord or the landlord’s representative with whom the tenant has previously corresponded by email or text, as well as traditional written communication. Any medical or financial information provided to the landlord shall be held in confidence, and only be used for evaluating the tenant’s claim.

SECTION 5. Nothing in this ordinance shall relieve the tenant of liability for the unpaid rent, nor restrict a landlord’s ability to recover rent due. A tenant shall not be deemed in default of rent payment obligations unless the Tenant fails to tender rent payments which were unpaid due to Financial Impacts related to COVID-19, within 6 months of May 31, 2020, or within 6 months of the date upon which an extension of the moratorium as described in Section 9 of this ordinance expires, whichever is later. A Landlord shall not impose, charge, or collect a late fee or equivalent surcharge for any rent payments which were unpaid due to Financial Impacts related to COVID-19. Tenants and Landlords are encouraged to agree to a payment plan during this six-month period, but nothing in this ordinance shall be construed to prevent a Tenant from paying a Landlord any amount due incrementally during this six-month period. Any three-day notices to pay or quit or No-Fault eviction notices served prior to the effective date of this ordinance, but not yet expired, are automatically deemed served upon the conclusion of the Moratorium Period.

SECTION 6. For purposes of this ordinance, “Financial Impacts related to COVID-19” (“Financial Impact”) include nonpayment of rent, arising out of a substantial decrease in household or business income (including, but not limited to, a substantial decrease in household income caused by layoffs or a reduction in the number of compensable hours of work, or a substantial decrease in business income caused by a reduction in opening hours or consumer demand), or substantial out-of-pocket medical expenses, or a Tenant’s lost household income as a result of caring for minor children affected by school, pre-school and/or childcare closures; *provided that*, the Financial Impact was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, or by any local, state or federal government response to COVID-19, and is documented.

SECTION 7. This ordinance applies to terminations of tenancies for nonpayment of rent, including eviction notices, no-fault eviction notices as defined herein, and unlawful detainer actions based on such notices, served or filed during the effective period of this ordinance. For purposes of this ordinance, “no-fault eviction notices” refer to any eviction for which the notice to terminate tenancy is not based on alleged fault by the tenant.

SECTION 8. In the event of a violation of this ordinance, this ordinance grants a defense where an unlawful detainer action is commenced in violation of this ordinance. Additionally, an aggrieved tenant may institute a civil proceeding for injunctive relief, money damages of not less than three times actual damages, and whatever other relief the court deems appropriate. The prevailing party shall be entitled to reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to the order of the court. The remedy available under this section shall be in addition to any other existing remedies which may be available to the tenant under local, state or federal law.

SECTION 9. The moratorium on evictions as described herein shall be in force and effect until May 31, 2020, until and unless superseded by a duly enacted ordinance of the City Council, or a further order by the Director of Emergency Services, adopted during the local

emergency that expressly supersedes this ordinance. Should the Governor extend Executive Order N-28-20, the moratorium will continue automatically beyond May 31, 2020, to the date of the Governor's extension, unless superseded.

SECTION 10. If any provision of this ordinance is found to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, that invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions of this chapter which can be implemented without the invalid provisions, and to this end, the provisions of this chapter are declared to be severable. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted this ordinance and each provision thereof irrespective of whether any one or more provisions are found invalid, unconstitutional or otherwise unenforceable.

SECTION 11. The City Clerk shall certify the adoption of this ordinance and shall cause this ordinance to be published by title and summary in the manner required by law.

SECTION 12. For the reasons set forth above in the recitals, this ordinance is an urgency ordinance and shall take effect immediately upon adoption by a 4/5 vote of the City Council, due to the immediate need to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED this 31st day of March 2020.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

DATE

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES) ss.
CITY OF SANTA CLARITA)

I, Mary Cusick, City Clerk of the City of Santa Clarita, do hereby certify that the foregoing Urgency Ordinance No. 20-3 was duly introduced and adopted at the special meeting of the City Council on the 31st day of March 2020, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS: McLean, Miranda, Weste, Kellar, Smyth

NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS: None

AND I FURTHER CERTIFY that the foregoing is the original of Ordinance No. 20-3 and was published in The Signal newspaper in accordance with State Law (G.C. 40806).

CITY CLERK