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Los Angeles' ambitious "Green New Deal" calls for, among other things, eliminating or offsetting building emissions and reducing building energy use by 44%, both by 2050. This is an impressive and ambitious target, and while the city has begun restricting some emissions from *new* buildings, it is still figuring out how to tackle the far more difficult task of reducing the emissions and energy use of *existing* buildings.

The latest policy brief from the Emmett Institute examines the potential impacts such a policy could have on LA's residential tenants. (The report is inspired by the work of Environmental Law Clinic partner Strategic Actions for a Just Economy.) People who rent their homes deserve special consideration in the city's building-decarbonization policy for several reasons: The majority of LA households rent; renters are disproportionately members of groups that have been poorly treated by past housing and environmental policy, including Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and low-income people; and renters have less control than homeowners

over their housing situation and home environment, since key aspects of their lives, from what appliances they can use to whether they can remain in their homes, are often determined by their landlords.

We don't yet know what the city's building-decarbonization policy will look like, but any program that meets the Green New Deal targets will have potentially immense impacts—good or bad—on LA tenants. For one, major work of the kind that could achieve highly efficient and carbon-neutral buildings can trigger additional rent increases under the city's Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which covers most apartments in the city. Those same retrofits could even lead to displacement: either by enabling formal evictions (landlords use government-mandated retrofits to kick out tenants, as seen recently in the Barrington Plaza debacle) or by giving landlords cover to pressure tenants to leave through misinformation or "harassment by construction." And landlords will have incentive to raise rent or replace tenants with higher-paying ones, because of both the up-front costs of decarbonization work and the increased market value that the newly renovated homes will have.

At the same time, building decarbonization represents an immense opportunity to improve tenants' wellbeing. Achieving the city's targets will likely require replacing climate-warming gas appliances with high-efficiency electric ones; improving heating, air-conditioning, and ventilation systems to reduce energy use; and potentially adding on-site electricity generation like rooftop solar. All of these measures can be beneficial to tenants that live in the buildings, if done right. The report highlights a few of these "co-benefits," though there are many more: Appliance switching and increased ventilation can improve indoor air quality, protecting tenant's health, while energy efficiency and distributed generation can reduce or even eliminate tenants' energy bills.

Securing these co-benefits—and protecting against potential rent increases and evictions—is only possible with a carefully crafted building-decarbonization program. To this end, the report makes eight specific policy recommendations, intended to be applicable to any path the city may take to achieving the Green New Deal goals:

- Prevent the costs of decarbonization retrofits from being passed on to rent-stabilized tenants;
- Eliminate provisions in the Los Angeles Municipal Code that allow landlords to evict tenants in order to renovate their properties;
- Strengthen enforcement and oversight of existing tenant protections;

- Make any subsidies to landlords conditional on agreements not to raise rents or evict their tenants;
- Prioritize retrofits that improve tenants' health and quality of life, such as appliance electrification and ventilation improvements;
- Ensure that tenants benefit from energy savings from energy-efficiency measures and on-site solar (or other distributed generation);
- Create an oversight body with meaningful tenant representation and real power to guide the City's decarbonization policy; and
- Promote housing models that can better protect tenants, such as publicly owned housing, deeply affordable deed-restricted housing, and community land trusts.

What the city's existing-building decarbonization program will ultimately look like is still unclear. The city is reportedly expected to have rules in place for decarbonizing existing buildings at some point this year, but details are sparse. LA's Climate Emergency Management Office held a series of workshops in partnership with key local community organizations and leaders, culminating in a report released last year. The city's Department of Buildings and Safety (DBS) has said it is working on a plan, and has been instructed by the City Council to report on that plan and its impact on low-income residents, but DBS doesn't appear to have released any public information yet. Hopefully, that plan will take into consideration the impacts on LA renters and adopt policies like those recommended in this report.