

# **History of Tenant Organizing and Rent Control in Massachusetts 1969-1994**

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# I. Introduction and Background

- Massachusetts had statewide rent control during World War II and lasting until 1955.
- Between 1970-1994, there was rent control in Boston, Cambridge, Brookline (started in 1969 in Boston
- And rent control was in effect some of those years in Lynn and Somerville and Lowell.
- Rent Control is **STILL IN EFFECT FOR MOBILE HOME TENANTS IN 21 COMMUNITIES IN MA!!**

## **--WHO SAID THIS WAS BORING?**

**Read about homes of both a tenant organizer and a landlord group staffer being firebombed during a rent control campaign, the head of the Mafia Massachusetts owning buildings under rent control and attending hearings, when a tenant leader accuses an anti-rent control City Councilor of giving her VD, and a big absentee landlord slugged a tenant organizer outside of a Rent Control hearing!?!'**

In 2021 passing rent control legislation seemed impossible.....real estate lobby was strongly against it and Governor Baker was very likely to veto. It requires 108 votes in the House to override a veto instead of 81 when a Governor signs a bill.

But in November, running on a platform that included rent control as a significant point, Michelle Wu was elected Mayor by a wide margin over City Councilor Anissa Essabi-George who did not support this. Then Governor Baker announced he would not run for re-election.

Looking to 2023, Mayor Wu is working on passing a Home Rule Petition through the City Council and then to the State Legislature. There will likely be a Democrat elected Governor this fall of 2022 and that person will likely support rent control. It will still be very, very hard to get home rule petitions or a state law giving local communities the option to pass it (one is pending now) because real estate interests have a lot of power. There's a significant number of more moderate legislators, and many legislators have few tenants in their district, so some legislators don't think this is important. But this issue has gone from one that seemed impossible to win to one that's very unlikely to win, but no longer impossible.

A majority of residents of Boston are tenants (this is true in some Gateway Cities too) but live in different circumstances with different kinds of landlords and laws affecting their circumstances. These include tenants in absentee-owned buildings, owner-occupied two and three family homes, tenants in public housing, and tenants in federal or state subsidized housing.

Subsidized housing is privately owned but there is some regulation of rent levels based on the owner (both non-profits and for-profits receiving federal or state subsidies to build the building or operate it. This includes whole buildings built with government subsidies or individual units where the tenant has a rent subsidy such as Section 8 to help them pay the rent on that unit.

There have been political battles over many years by tenants living in absentee owned buildings seeking to get some protection from large rent increases, arbitrary or retaliatory evictions, and condominium conversions. Absentee landlords have always had a powerful place in state and city politics during this period because of campaign

donations to mayors and city councilors, state representatives and senators and by funding an organization and lobby group called the Greater Boston Real Estate Board.

Although the majority of residents in some cities are tenants, a majority may not tenants who live in buildings with absentee landlords. Many other tenants live in public housing, subsidized housing, or in owner-occupied buildings. Tenants have never been registered to vote in as high a percentage as homeowners and tenants have only been asked to vote on the basis of candidate's positions on tenants rights issues at some elections when tenants organizations organized in this way. Politicians have taken stands on both sides of this issue caught between their own beliefs about government regulation of the basic necessity of affordable housing or not, the campaign donations they could get from absentee landlords, or the sense that they sometimes wanted to stand with tenants because of their beliefs or this could be a constituency to help them get elected.

These issues bring out strong feelings and stand your ground positions. Landlords, even when they don't live in their buildings, somehow feel they have more rights than their tenants and are entitled to their right to be free of any government regulation than even most other business owners feel. For tenants, it's their home that is at stake but it always feels tenuous to them since they may not aspire to be in this apartment forever and they know that a large rent increase or eviction notice could be waiting for them any month to make them move when they don't want to.

## **II. Timeline of Organizing Campaigns and Major Events**

**NOTE: Much of this time line covers statewide and Boston events. Later sections cover Lynn, Cambridge, Somerville Brookline, Lowell, and Waltham.**

**During World War I**, there was price regulation which included rents, and while MA did not go as far as say New York City or the District of Columbia to have explicit post-war rent controls, there were a number of important protections that either were temporary or in some cases, permanent tenant protections that came into place post World War I.

**1920-1927** at the state level that put a cap on excessive rent increases. There was a Massachusetts state department or commission called the Division for Necessities of Life. Some cities set up commissions to enforce this.

**During World War II**...Then, rent control was re-established nationally going into World War II, and again, while federal rules were gradually phased out around 1953, MA continued its protections through the Korean War **and until roughly 1955.**

Two different Marshall House cases impacted the adoption of rent control laws from 1969 on too.

1. **Passage of Boston law allows the first review of rent increases in 1969**, Chapter 863 and a similar one in Brookline. This law allowed review of rent increases only in buildings of 6 or more units and only for the individual tenants who filed complaints. The Marshall House I court suit later said that communities needed state enabling legislation to do this and Marshall House II upheld the state enabling law.

**In Jim Vrabel's book, *A People's History of the New Boston*, there's this account of Anita Bromberg with the first case heard by the Board...**

“Much of the pressure to bring back rent control [it was in effect during WW II] came from tenants in Allston-Brighton....Anita Bromberg emerged as the unlikely leader of the tenants movement in Allston-Brighton. Prior to her divorce, her best friend Mary Honan [Kevin Honan's mother] recalled that Bromberg had so little interest in politics "that I had to tell her who the state rep was. But afterwards she got involved because she had to keep a roof over the heads of her daughter and her parents, and she knew she had to do it herself.".....

On March 16, 1970, the Rent Appeals Board convened for the first time [after Chapter 863 of the Acts of 1969, a Boston rent control enabling law, was passed on November 1, 1969]. The City Hall hearing room was packed with a crowd of "middle class residents of the area, elderly persons, student tenants and community action activists". Appropriately, the first case the board heard involved the tenant leader Anita Bromberg, who was threatened with eviction for refusing to pay an almost 40 percent rent increase for the apartment she shared with her daughter and parents on 141 Chiswick Road.

Bromberg told the board that until recently her eight-unit building had been filled with families, but that now hers was the only one left. ( Jim C:I still have a number of former Boston College student friends living in her buiding who supported her efforts.)When she denounced landlords demanding the kind of huge rent increase she was facing as "gougers", the crowd cheered. When the lawyer for Bromberg's landlord got up and defended his client, the crowd responded with "groans, hisses, and loud asides". After deliberating briefly, the board rejected the proposed rent increase and ordered that Bromberg and her family be allowed to remain in their apartment at the current rent. The crowd cheered again, even more loudly.”

[Anita Bromberg’s grandson is Mike Firestone, who is Mayor Michelle Wu’s Policy Director!]

**2. Passage of Chapter 842 in 1970, the statewide enabling law allowing cities and towns to adopt rent and eviction control laws.**

Tenant organizing in the late 1960’s was led by the Allston-Bright Tenant Organization, Frank Manning’s MA Association of Older Americans organization of affected seniors, and the South End Tenants Action Council. They were then joined by the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee, the Dorchester Tenants Action Council, and the Jamaica Plain Tenant Action Group.

[Note on Frank Manning--Before becoming the most noted senior citizen leader in the state in the late 1960’s to 1980’s, Frank had been a labor organizer including a major figure in the New Bedford strike of 1928. 12,000 textile workers were on strike for a whole year during that campaign.]

The Governor’s race in 1970 provided an opportunity for the passage of this law. Then Boston Mayor Kevin White was a candidate for Governor and supported the pending legislation. Then incumbent liberal Republican Governor Francis

Sargent supported the law and was influenced by his Chief of Staff, former Chelsea State Representative, Al Kramer. This helped push another candidate for Governor, Senate President Maurice Donahue, to push the enabling legislation through the State Senate in the summer of 1970 prior to the September Primary that he and Kevin White were in. Then State Senator and later powerful Congressman Joe Moakley played a role in its passage too as he did in passing rent control later in 1972 when on the Boston City Council, and as did then State Representative and later Governor Michael Dukakis.

3. In the fall of 1970, Boston strengthens parts of its rent regulation law but does not adopt the comprehensive Chapter 842 rent and eviction law that had just been passed. Brookline and Cambridge do adopt the Chapter 842 enabling law.
4. Mayor White, running for re-election in 1971 and again facing Louise Day Hicks, posts billboards around the city that proclaimed, "When landlords raise rents, Mayor White raises hell." Another one said, "When landlords cuts services, Mayor White cuts the rents." White is re-elected.
5. In 1972, tenants organizations in Boston form a citywide coalition and won adoption of the Chapter 842 comprehensive rent and eviction control law covering tenants in absentee owned 3 family buildings and larger buildings. There were several raucous City Council hearings during this campaign. Dorchester Tenants Action Council, Tenants Association of Boston (Roxbury), South End Tenants Council, and the Allston-Brighton Tenants Council, and Frank Manning's MA Association of Older Americans, together led this campaign. Mac McCreight of Greater Boston Legal Services notes, "A piece of this also had to do with governmentally involved housing,. I believe because there were some benefits to doing so, Boston decided to use BOTH sources of authority (c. 863 and c. 842), rather than switching over. This actually was helpful later, since c. 842 had a sunset provision and communities had to get their own enabling laws adopted to continue protections (that happened in 1976 with Cambridge (Chapter 36) and Somerville (Chapter 37))."
6. Mayor White signs City Council ordinance in 1974 that exempts 6 high rent large apartment buildings from the city's rent control laws. This effort was led by Jerome Rappaport, owner of Charles River Park apartments. It exempted his buildings and Tremont on the Common apartments owned by Max Kargman, Jamaica Way Towers owned by Arnold Soloway, and some others.

## 7. 1975

- a. **The statewide enabling law, Chapter 842 was passed as a 5-year law that would sunset December 31, 1975.** Tenants campaigned for its extension and landlords for its ending. **A compromise ended the enabling law but passed special enabling laws allowing current laws in affect in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and Brookline to continue.** This decision went right up to a New Year's Eve session of the Legislature!!
- b. In the 1971 race for Mayor, of Boston, Mayor White had ads in the subways reading, "When Landlords raise rents, Mayor White raises hell". And "When landlords cut services, Mayor White cuts the rents". **BUT in 1975 in a major change in his position, Mayor White leads an effort to weaken the city's rent and eviction laws and pushes for Vacancy**

**Decontrol.** He even made the infamous statement quoted in the Boston Herald; “Rent Control Stinks”.

Vacancy decontrol means that when the current tenant moves, the owner can raise the rent as much as they want and the unit remains free of rent and eviction control law ( such protections were later restored partially in 1982 and 1984). White is influenced in this direction by his Housing Adviser named Andrew Olins. In the 1980’s, Olins becomes a developer and was also president for a year of the absentee landlord’s organization called the Rental Housing Association (RHA) of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board.

In a community meeting a year later, City Councilor John Kerrigan is accused by a woman at a meeting at St. Mark’s Church Hall of giving her VD. The crowd became very quiet, Kerrigan muttered sweet nothing swears under his breath, as the woman, tenant leader Joan Matthews Wells of Dorchester explained that he had voted for Vacancy Decontrol (VD)!!!

## 8. 1979

In the first major condo conversion,) the owner of Towne Estates, a complex of 354 units in Brighton with many elderly tenants, moves to convert them to condos. Mayor White and city councilors attend tenants protest meetings and vow they will not be evicted. However, White and the Council only approve an ordinance giving tenants 1-2 years before they are evicted for condos.

Mac McCreight from Greater Boston Legal Services noted additionally; “Here again, some discussion about what then happened in Brookline and Cambridge, and how that pushed Boston to do more, may be helpful. In Brookline, the whole issue about imposing time periods before an owner could proceed with eviction was the issue litigated in Grace v. Town of Brookline. Can’t remember how the timing between Town Estates & Grace intersected. Brookline’s enabling law did encourage homeownership, so Brookline didn’t think it could bar condo conversion eviction entirely (since condo ownership could be homeownership). Then, in Flynn v. Cambridge, Cambridge established the removal permit system where permission would need to be obtained before a unit could be converted to condominiums (potentially outlawing condo conversion eviction outright), and this was upheld by the SJC. In the meantime, Brookline had expanded its protections and moved more toward a condo conversion ban system, and there was federal court litigation on that (Chan and Loeterman). Boston extended the notice and relocation benefits for condo conversion evictions but did not bar them until 1983.”

## 9. 1981

**Massachusetts Tenants Organization (MTO)** forms in 1980 and decides to campaign for pro-tenant city council candidates as a way to reverse the many City Council’s votes against tenants in passage of vacancy decontrol in 1975.

**MTO forms the Boston Tenants Campaign Organization (BTCO)** and endorses 4 candidates, 3 challengers and incumbent City Councilor Ray Flynn. They are endorsed as **the “Tenant Ticket”** in electoral work done by BTCO. Some of those on the Tenant Ticket finish 1-4 in Ward 21 and MTO gets some

notice by the politicians and media. Michael McCormick is endorsed and elected but some years later reneges on his support for rent control.

## 10. 1982

MTO and its member tenant organizations from around the city of Boston campaign for passage of stronger rent and eviction controls. The City faced a deadline to renew the current law even in the weakened form of vacancy decontrol. In a surprise to many, the City Council voted for a much stronger law. Mayor White seemed to be in a bind between not wanting to sign the stronger law and not wanting the weakened law to expire on 12/31/82.

White calls the City Council to attend a special New Year's Eve session, which they didn't have to attend but they do. They pass a compromise law that allow the tenants with no rights due to vacancy decontrol to now oppose rent increases under vacancy decontrol by filing grievances against rent increases above the cost of living, tenants are given expanded condo conversion and condo eviction protections, just cause eviction protections are given to decontrolled tenants,.

**This is the first major increase in tenants rights since the significant weakening of the law with vacancy decontrol in 1975.**

## 11. 1983 and the Mayor's Race

The race for Mayor and a City Council to be elected by district rather than all at large created many dangers and opportunities for tenants.

Candidates Larry DiCara, previously endorsed on the Tenant Ticket, David Finnegan, and Dennis Kearney were not for any strengthening of the tenants' rights laws and DiCara and Finnegan received considerable campaign contributions from absentee landlords. DiCara had been a champion of rent control when the City passed the Chapter 842 enabling law in 1972, but later on changed his position.

Candidates City Councilor Ray Flynn and State Representative Mel King both supported stronger laws for tenants.

David Finnegan was the leader in polls up to the election and the other candidates were bunched together. In an upset, King and Flynn came in first and second and proceeded to the final election and Finnegan was a close third.

MTO's political action committee, Boston Tenants Campaign Organization, had earlier in the race endorsed Ray Flynn by a 2-1 vote of its members. King supporters were angry with this decision since he had a strong tenants rights record too, but Flynn was more identified with these issues since they had been coming before the City Council and he'd been a leader on them there.

BTCO also endorsed city council candidates for the new district seats as well as the at-large seats (community groups had worked to change the City Council from one with 9 at-large seats to one with 9 District seats + 4 At-Large seats). With King and Flynn in the final election, MTO/BTCO concentrated especially on the council races since both Mayoral candidates were tenants' rights supporters. The BTCO endorsed candidate for City Council in the South Boston/South End/Chinatown district, Mike Taylor was narrowly defeated by Jim Kelley, a very conservative candidate who had formerly led the South Boston

Information Center, the organization opposed to the court ordered desegregation with busing.

## 12. **1984**

With the election of Mayor Flynn and district city councilors, MTO felt there was a chance to strengthen Boston's rent regulation and condo conversion laws back to the comprehensive laws the city had from 1972-1975.....this type of rent control system would mean landlords would have to apply for all increases and evictions to a Rent Board, units would still be covered when a tenant moved. It would exempt owner occupied 1,2, 3 family buildings and newly constructed buildings.

MTO and Mayor Flynn launched a campaign for passage of such a law. City Council President Joe Tierney did not support this and appointed rent control opponent, City Councilor James Kelley, to head the Housing Committee that would hold hearings on the proposed legislation.

In an unusual move, Mayor Flynn actually attended and testified at one of the City Council hearings.

MTO organized neighborhood meetings before the final vote with the City Councilors to try to persuade them to vote for the proposed law. Meetings were organized in Hyde Park with Councilor Tom Menino, the North End with Councilor Robert Travaglini, Dorchester with Councilor Jim Byrne, Roxbury with Councilor Bolling, and West Roxbury with Councilor Hennigan.

The final City Council vote was 7-6 against the stronger comprehensive law.

The Council did extend the scope of the rent grievance procedure and condo conversion laws some. Chapter 34 of the Ordinances of 1984 did also include condo conversion eviction ban for low-to-moderate income, as well as elderly/disabled, who previously had extended notice periods but no ban

City Councilor and later to be Mayor Tom Menino and City Councilor and later to be Senate President Robert Travaglini, both voted against the law.

MTO worked hard with several North End meetings to get Travagalini's vote but Jerome Rappaport, owner of Charles River Park and a major campaign contributor and landlord leader, worked to get him to oppose this and he did.

13. In the 1985-1989 period, the City Council took additional action to partially restrict condo conversion evictions. At one point an ordinance required a removal permit from the Rent Equity Board in order to evict tenants for condos.

Mac McCreight of GBLS notes: "This was the system from 1988 through 1994. No permit could be provided for "ban" tenants. Because prior litigation with Greater Boston Real Estate Board had raised some questions about a prior permit system, the City had obtained additional home rule authority (believe St. 1987, c. 45) to do that. In addition, when tenants in the city's only mobile home park were faced with rent increases, the Rent Board held hearings and acted to determine they were covered under the ordinance. The Legislature made clear



that Boston could regulate this park. GBLS was also involved in federal litigation to help protect the tenants from displacement by Clair Motors, and tenants were successful in those efforts. Eventually the mobile home park went into non-profit ownership. (Jay Rose & I were involved with this and there were a LOT of Boston Rent Equity Board hearings about it). There was also a system for SRO (lodging house/single room occupancy) removal permits, pet ownership rights, and language on governmentally involved housing meant to discourage prepayment and opt-outs.” Later there was a big fight at the Rent Board and Housing Court to protect lodging house tenants in the old Buckminster Hotel in Kenmore Square that met with a degree of success.

Mike Fogelberg, who was an MTO Director remembers:  
“In the 1985-1991 period, MTO led three major Boston legislative campaigns. Computer voter list practices were adopted by Boston progressive activists in 1987. The MTO PAC, the Boston Tenants Campaign Organization (BTCO) acquired a list of the 85,000 (+/-) privately owned rental properties covered by the Boston Rent Equity Board and compiled an address database. The addresses were matched with the voter file producing a list of registered tenant voters. Using this new resource, the BTCO conducted direct mail to 25,000+ renters with Tenant Ticket endorsement poll cards beginning in 1987 pushing the City Council to support more pro-tenant legislation.

It was during this period that MTO won 1) a condo conversion permit system restricting conversions while providing tenants an option to purchase their apartments and expanded general eviction protections, 2) council enactment of rent regulations on federally subsidized “expiring-use” affordable housing if owners terminated the federal rent regulations, and 3) rent regulations for the one mobile home park in Boston.”

14. Somerville had rent control enabling authority and passed a law but then its City Council had voted to end rent control in December 1978 to take effect March 1978. However, Somerville did use state enabling authority to grant condo conversion eviction protections to tenants beyond the statewide “floor” found in the legislation that MTO successfully championed in 1983 (see St. 1983, c. 527).

15. **1994 Referendum Question 9 that passed and abolished rent control in Massachusetts**

Looking back on it, Boston had come to a compromise in the landlord-tenant “wars” over rent regulation. The rent grievance system that Boston adopted in 1982 allowed tenants some rights to oppose and limit large rent increases but owners could otherwise raise rents without restriction if tenants did not file grievances against rent increases. Also tenants could not be evicted based on the “just cause” standard but this could only be raised as a defense in court in Boston. Tenant organizations had wanted the stronger rent control laws where all rent increases in absentee owned buildings were reviewed related to a fair net operating income formula and landlords wanted no laws in affect.

This “compromise” lasted until 1994, when Cambridge landlords, who had not been able to reverse the stronger rent control laws there, found a loophole that enabled them to put a statewide referendum to abolish rent control and any rent regulation laws on the ballot even though only Boston, Brookline, and Cambridge

had such laws. This effort to qualify it for the ballot then included major landlord groups like the Greater Boston Real Estate Board and they had the money to pay signature gatherers to collect the needed many tens of thousands of signatures to qualify this for the ballot

It was seen as controversial to have a statewide referendum that would decide if Boston, Cambridge, and Brookline could keep their rent control laws and whether other communities could pass such laws. Attorney General Scott Harshbarger ruled it was qualified for the ballot. This was challenged by Legal Services but Harshbarger's ruling was upheld by the courts so the referendum went on the 1994 ballot.

**Outspending the tenants organizations 10-1 and having an referendum on an issue that did not directly affect 348 of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts, the landlords won by a 46.3%-43.9% vote, with 9.7% blank votes; 1,034,599 to 980,736 . Boston, Brookline and Cambridge overwhelmingly voted no on the question by well over 54%**

See the county by county vote on the 1994 Referendum Question 9 at [https://electionstats.state.ma.us/ballot\\_questions/view/5877/](https://electionstats.state.ma.us/ballot_questions/view/5877/)

### **Summary of Question 9 the 1994 Referendum to End Rent Control**

This proposed law would prohibit rent control for most privately owned housing units in Massachusetts, and would nullify certain existing rent control laws, except that cities and towns would be authorized to adopt a restricted form of rent control for a six month period, after which compliance by property owners would be voluntary.

The proposed law would prohibit any city or town from enacting, maintaining or enforcing any law that requires below-market rents for residential properties. It would also prohibit the regulation of occupancy, services, evictions, condominium conversion, or the removal of the unit from rent control, if such regulation was part of a system requiring below-market rents. Existing state and local rent control laws would be nullified. The proposed law would not affect publicly owned or subsidized housing, federally assisted housing, or mobile homes.

Cities and towns would be authorized to adopt rent control for a six-month period on housing units that have a fair market rent of \$400 or less and that are owned by a person or entity owning ten or more rental units. Such rent control could not include the regulation of occupancy, services, evictions, condominium conversion, or the removal of the unit from rent control. The city or town would have to pay the owners of rent-controlled units the difference between the controlled rent and the fair market rent. After six months, owners of rent-controlled units would not be required to comply with the rent control regulation or with any other such regulation that the city or town might adopt in the future.

The proposed law would take effect on January 1, 1995. The proposed law states that if any of its provisions were declared invalid, the other provisions would remain in effect.”

One this passed, there were transition laws passed in Chapter 282 of the Acts of 1994 that phased out the 3 remaining rent control laws in Boston, Cambridge and Brookline in pieces between 1994-1996.

**As housing prices and rents rose dramatically beginning a few years later, and continuing until today, the fateful great consequences of this narrow defeat were felt by tenants in huge rent increases and the rapid gentrification that has occurred in most of the neighborhoods of Boston ever since and in Brookline, Cambridge, and Somerville.** And tenants in other communities also continue also to have no ability to enact a rent control law.

Not a week goes by that I don't greatly regret putting even more time into the 1994 referendum campaign that we lost.

Mac McCreight of GBLS notes: "Transition after repeal of rent control in 1994 Referendum: St. 1994, c. 282, which was the "transition" legislation that permitted regulation to be phased out between end of 1994 and end of 1996. There was also litigation in Boston about the City's efforts to be as expansive as possible with those protections. (I was involved in that case, but unfortunately GBREB was successful with keeping the scope narrow.) There was also the separate litigation between 1996-1999 about Boston condo protections (I was also involved with that), and then the 1999 compromise ordinance after the SJC ruled that the City had gone beyond what it could do under St. 1983, c. 527 (that involved a Saturday city council hearing, but didn't involve one on New Year's Eve—important to keep pre-Election Day pressure on Peggy Davis Mullen). Boston City Councillor Brian Honan was the champion on that piece, and Nancy Grilk & Helena Creamer were also involved. City Life and other organizations tried to mount campaigns in the late 1990's and early 2000's for different forms of regulation (some drawing from the model of Fair Rent Commissions such as exist in CT), but Council President Flaherty resisted and none of those got out of City Council to the legislature, except for MAHT's continued home rule proposals on governmentally involved housing (which perennially are passed by City Council but go nowhere at the State House)."

### **III. Some Tenant Organizations and their organizing over the years**

Many neighborhoods of Boston have supported tenant organizations over the years but more of them existed in the 1970's and 1980's than in the years that followed.

#### **1. South End**

- a. South End Tenants Council (SETC)--formed in the mid-1960's. It led the famous organizing campaign against landlords Mindick and Larner. The tenants actually took these landlords to the Rabbinic Court to dramatize their plight of bad living conditions. Eventually, their efforts resulted in Mindick and Larner selling the buildings to a non-profit entity that SETC set up. It was called South End Tenant Management and Tenant Development Corporation (TDC). Ted Parish was the charismatic director/organizer of SETC and was followed by Marian McEllheny in that position.

- b. Inquilinos Boriquas en Accion (IBA) was formed by mostly Puerto Rican tenants in the late 1960's to oppose their displacement from the South End. Their organizing led to the Boston Redevelopment Authority designating them to be the developer on certain parcels of land in the South End where they built affordable family units, an elderly high rise, and a square around it; this is called **Villa Victoria**. Phil Bradley, Dick Lampert, and Jovita Fontanez were IBA organizers and leaders amongst others. IBA has gone forward over all these years and is still an active community development corporation managing housing, running social service programs and trying to build new housing.

## 2. **Fenway**

This area that felt the pressure of rising rents due to the growth in enrollment from Northeastern University and landlords renting to students living in groups at higher rents.

Two tenants organizations dating back to the 1970's organized in the area: the Symphony Tenants Organizing Committee (STOP) and the Fenway Area Tenants Union. Their work is continued into today by the Fenway CDC.

STOP was well known for exposing a major arson for profit ring that involved fire marshals and absentee landlords. One of the fires ruled an arson in July 1975 in which a 20 year old woman died resulted in the photograph of her and her baby god daughter and niece falling from a collapsed fire escape five stories up and a firefighter who tried to save her. Boston Herald photographer Stanley Forman won a Pulitzer Prize for this photo.

Fenway tenant leader David Scondras was elected as the first district city councilor for the Fenway/Back Bay/Beacon Hill district based on his work in tenant organizing and exposing the arson for profit ring while at STOP. He was also the first gay elected city councilor in Boston. Gifted researcher Michael Moore was also important in this work and later directed the Arson Commission during the Flynn Administration. Helen Cox, a tenant leader from this period continued this work all these years now with the Fenway CDC as was Rosaria Salerno, later to be elected as a City Councilor.

And preserving the Hotel Buckminster rooming house building located near Fenway Park with aid of GBLs lawyers Jay Rose and Jeff Purcell and tenant leaders Red Burrows and Brian Clague.

## 3. **Allston-Brighton**

This area was much affected by the growth of Boston College and Boston University which expanded their enrollments greatly in the 1960's without building enough dorms so students were allowed to live off-campus and absentee landlords sought to rent to groups of students at higher rents and push out family and elderly tenants.

Allston-Brighton had several tenant organizations during the 1970's and 1980's. It was also an area where Frank Manning, President of the Massachusetts Association of Older Americans (MAOA) did much organizing of seniors affected by these rent increases.

Anita Bromberg was a long term and colorful and wonderful tenant leader in all the Allston-Brighton tenant groups and was the first tenant with a case at the Boston Rent Control Administration.

The Allston-Brighton Community Tenants Organization had prominent organizing campaigns against two of Boston's biggest absentee landlords, Harold Brown of Hamilton Realty and Leonard Samia of the Samia Companies. Nancy Grilk and Tina Leardi were leaders in the Hamilton Tenants Union work of the Allston Brighton tenants group and Grant Young, Bob Gardiner, John Ballard, Eddie Beecher, and Bob Gehret were other leaders. and GBLs Attorney Harvey Shapiro did extensive work on this too.

#### 4. **Jamaica Plain**

The Jamaica Plain Tenant Action Group (JP TAG) organized in the 1970's and was succeeded by City Life/Vida Urbana as a tenants organizing group. City Life continues its organizing today and now does this around the city and in Greater Boston though is still based in Jamaica Plain.

Kathy Brown who headed City Life for many years went on to direct the Boston Tenants Coalition which organizes citywide on tenant and housing issues.

**City Life** has been a very effective organizer of foreclosed homeowners and tenants with absentee landlords with organizers Steve Meacham, Andres Del Castillo, and Lisa Owens Pinto and others. City Life now organizes across all of Boston and metropolitan Boston, not just in Jamaica Plain.

#### 5. **Dorchester**

One of the earlier tenants organizations was formed in Dorchester in 1968 and was called the Dorchester Tenants Action Council. It organized in the buildings of many absentee landlords of this area, George Wattendorf, Irwin Cantor, Geneva Realty, Gem Realty. The organization broadened its focus by becoming a neighborhood improvement organization and changing its name to Dorchester Community Action Council in 1974 and then merging with Massachusetts Fair Share in 1975. Neighborhood leader Joe Dunn, first led DTAC and then Bob Stuhlman directed the group from 1969-1971. David Rome and Lew Finfer worked there 1970-1972. Lew Finfer and Peter Power led the group from 1972-1973 as organizers and tenant leaders like Joan Wells and Willie Harrison too.

For some years later in the 1970's, a colorful figure named Art Standley led a tenants union called the Uphams Corner Tenant Organizing Group.

#### 6. **Back Bay-Beacon Hill**

The Back Bay-Beacon Hill Tenants Union was very active during the 1980's and saw the first and most active amount of condominium conversion during this period. Steve Reuys, Mary Anne Payne, Celia Shapiro, Ed Mroz, and Peter Clennott, who later worked at the City of Boston Arson Commission were leaders in this group.

## 7. Mission Hill

The Roxbury Tenants of Harvard was organized by tenants living in Harvard owned buildings in Mission Hill who faced displacement by Harvard affiliated hospitals. Robert and Theresa Parks were the long term leaders of this group. They got initial assistance from some Harvard students including Jean Neville, Hayden Duggan, and Doug Levinson during the Harvard student strike of 1969. This group got Harvard to build the 800 unit subsidized housing development called Mission Park which continues today. The Roxbury Tenants of Harvard named buildings within this development after the Harvard students who aided them.

## 8. Roxbury

One of the earliest tenant organizations of this period was formed in 1968 and called the Tenants Association of Boston (TAB) and directed by Eva Curry. It was formed around the large scale renovation of 3000 apartments in Roxbury and Dorchester into subsidized housing under a program called Boston Urban Rehabilitation Program (BURP). BURP was a federal demonstration program approved especially due to Massachusetts US Senator Edward Brooke. However, there were many construction defects in the renovations that led to tenant grievances and the formation of this organization (see books about this by Langley Keyes The Rehab Planning Game and by Emily Achtenberg). Jim Creamer, who later became an official at the Boston Rent Equity Board, was an organizer for this organization too along with Charlie Creamer, and Gerry Katz who later was a lawyer representing many tenants, and Eva Curry was its Director.

Jim Creamer remembers: "Our group, The Tenants Association of Boston came to the City Council rent control hearing in the fall of 1972. In my testimony at which I was scared to death, I mentioned where I lived and the lousy conditions. City Councillor Dapper O'Neil knew my landlord, George Bono, and detested him. Dapper's girlfriend at that time lived a couple of houses away. I believe that was Dapper's only vote for rent control, perhaps because of kismet, the questionable good fortune that I lived in such a slummy building with Attorney Jerry Katz."

## 9. Lowell

- a. The group formed there organized originally to stop the extension of the Lowell Connector by-pass from destroying the Back Central and Lower Belvidere neighborhoods of Lowell.

This group formed in Lowell including Ira Rubenzahl, Debbie Rubenzahl, and Alan Solomont and worked on local issues. They had a community newspaper called The Communicator. They worked with a group of residents in South Lowell to oppose the Lowell Connector road being built through that neighborhood; led by the Connector Objectors.

They did tenant organizing in subsidized housing at the developments at Northern Canal and Princeton Village. They did this work as part of statewide subsidized housing tenants group called the Tenants First Coalition. They also organized the tenants of a major landlord named Louis Saab.

They tried to get the Lowell City Council to pass rent control but lost a vote around 1972.

b. Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA)

Charlie Gargiulo, founder of CBA remembers:

“I think the heavy work for Rent Review Board was around 1984 or 1985 and the Lowell Ethnic Covenant Project was also involved with the organizing. In the early days CBA and Ethnic Covenant Project was very closely linked in that CBA leaders like myself, Arva Clark and Ramon Nieves assisted Sr. Pauline Leblanc and the late Fr. Gordon White in founding the Lowell Ethnic Covenant Project and serving on both boards. In fact, one of the original institutional board seats for CBA's creation was the Lowell Ethnic Covenant Project. Ramon Nieves actually became their first Executive Director while Vice President of CBA. We had some interlocking Board members as well.”

Bob Van Meter, Organizer for MTO in Lowell:

“**Lowell had a rent review board enacted in the 1970s.** When I got to Lowell in the fall of 1983 as the statewide MTO organizer to work with CBA and Fair Share on tenants rights in Lowell, the rent review board was supposed to sunset within the next year I think.

We created a Lowell Tenants Alliance over the next year or so and working with Judith Liben who was then with Merrimack Valley Legal Services we succeeded in extending the life of the rent review board.

We door knocked and had tenants from several apartment complexes all over town involved with the Tenant Alliance. I think Ginger Burchall lived in Princeton Village and was part of this. Angel Bermudez was the organizer at CBA and he and I worked on this together. I had a desk at the CBA/Fair Share office and was there about a day a week for at least a year and maybe more. This was also when CBA started organizing tenants at North Canal.

Charlie Gargiulo: “My first tenant battle was working for Fair Share with Mary Ochs in taking on and taking down Lowell's biggest and most notorious slumlord Louis Saab around 1977-78. He was a very intimidating figure to low income tenants who even employed strong armed thugs to intimidate tenants who reported code violations. It was my first organizing effort in Lowell and we made his life miserable and drove that bastard out of the rental housing market. He settled for making his fortunes with commercial real estate and selling vacation units at Salisbury Beach and gave up his slum housing in Lowell.”

Attaching a link to the actual Act to reestablish the Lowell Rent Review Board that was submitted from the Mass House of Reps.

<https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/596565/ocm39986872-1984-HB-6047.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

## 10. Lynn Rent Control history

Lynn passed rent control in 1972 by City Council vote. The landlords put it on the ballot later in 1972 to try to end it and lost the vote 60%-40%. Despite that vote of the people, the Lynn City Council voted to end rent control in 1973.

Urban renewal run by the City of Lynn in the Brick Yard neighborhood of Lynn tore down homes and small business. This alienated residents, who had formed the Citizens for a Better Lynn (CBL), to oppose it.

At the same time young progressive activists moved to Lynn and formed the Conversion Action Group headed by Joel Feigenbaum, Freddie Feigenbaum, Steve Wasserman, Jim May, and local activists including Paul Tradd. Also a collective of former SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) members moved to Lynn and organized under the name the Red Fist Collective and included Miles Rappaport, who later on became a MA Fair Share organizer and a state legislator and Secretary of State of Connecticut. The Red Fist also included local activists Chuck Spanger, Ann Serino, and Jack Carr.

Pasquale "Patty" Caggiano was elected Mayor of Lynn on a populist campaign to elect him and a new City Council. He took office in January 1972 but died in April. After Walter Meserve served as Interim Mayor until July, he was succeeded by Tony Marino in July, whose house had been torn down in the Brick Yard urban renewal.

The Conversion Action Group and the Red Fist collective, in alliance with Citizens for a Better Lynn, and other local leaders elected a new Lynn City Council and new Mayor Caggiano on a platform including Rent Control. Jim Benedetto was a Lynn homeowner and also a leader on the rent control campaign. This coalition won passage of rent control working with Mayor Caggiano, and then Mayor Marino, in 1972.

The Mayor appointed Joel Feigenbaum, a leader of the Conversion Action Group, to head the Rent Control Board that administered the law. Needless to say, no rent increases were approved that first year.

The landlords moved to end it by putting a referendum on the ballot but it lost 60%-40%.

The organizing on both sides went deep and was raucous.

Joel Feigenbaum, appointed to Lynn's Rent Control Board deciding on rent increases, wrote, " On February 21, 1973, a small explosive device was thrown at the apartment of Rent Control Board member Joel Feignebaum. The Feigenbaum family escaped injury, but several window were blown apart.....On Saturday March 10, the home of prominent anti-rent control landlord, William Nichols was bombed. The building, empty of people at the time, was completely destroyed. The incident took place only three days before the council meeting and served to divide the community further...The March 13 city council meeting drew a huge pro-tenants crowd of over a thousand people. The council quickly voted to uphold its earlier decision to rescind rent control [despite also a referendum vote in favor of rent control], again 6-5, and a spontaneous chanting by hundreds of tenant led to nine "detainments" by the Lynn Police."

There were City Council hearing and meetings attended by 500 people. Steve Wasserman remembers Jerry Anguilo, the head of the Mafia in Massachusetts,



attending a hearing. He was introduced by a landlord as the "godfather of us all". He lived in the North End and Nahant. Despite the landlords losing the citywide referendum to end rent control, the City Council took this up and voted out rent control in 1973.

A pro-landlord Mayor David Phillips was elected in 1973 and took office in January 1974. Although Tony Marino returned as Mayor 1976-1985, rent control did not return to Lynn.

Politicians went to the offices of the printer of the Conversion Action Group's community newspaper called The Newspaper and threatened the owner to stop printing it, but he didn't give in to those threats.

Ned Epstein, Joe Ross, Representative John Businger, Joanne Blumsack were some of the people involved in tenant organizing there.

## **11. Massachusetts Tenants Organization (MTO)**

MTO was formed in 1980 through the efforts of leaders from the different neighborhood tenants organizations that existed then in Boston and some other areas of the state. Also, Peter Dreier, who later became Mayor Flynn's Housing Adviser, helped in MTO's creation. Its first co-directors were John McDonough, who later became a state representative and a leader on health care issues in the Legislature and after that as Director of Health Care for All, and Lew Finfer, who continues today as an organizer at Massachusetts Communities Action Network.. Following Lew Finfer as Executive Director were Diane Gordon, Brenda McCarthy, and Mike Fogelberg and Meir Lakein. Other organizers at MTO that went on to serve in leadership roles within the community development and advocacy fields include Pam Bender who was the Director of Organizing at the Mass. Association of CDCs, Bob Van Meter who later served as Executive Director at Allston Brighton CDC and Lizbeth Heyer who has served in leadership roles at Jamaica Plain NDC and 2Life Communities.

MTO led several campaigns to strengthen Boston's rent regulation and condo regulation laws during the 1980's, the passage of a statewide law in 1982 regulating condo conversions, and also led an effort to elect city councilors and a mayor who were more supportive of tenants through a political action committee called the Boston Tenants Campaign Organization (see the earlier description of this organizing work).

A number of communities tried to control extensive condo conversions by ordinance only to be repeatedly shut down in the court (SJC decisions involving Fall River and Newton). This prompted many bills for local enabling legislation which were then folded into a "baseline" set of protections (minimum notice period of a year, plus relocation benefits, and enhanced notice periods for certain vulnerable populations, and ability to adopt stronger protections by super-majority). MTO's work was critical to this passing (as was the Dukakis Administration's replacement of the King Administration.)

MTO led a campaign that won passage of 1-2 years notice law in around 1983 for tenants facing condo conversion. MTO also did organizing to support tenants in MA Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) subsidized buildings that Diane Gordon was the organizer for.

## 12. Subsidized Housing Organizing

- a. A group called the Tenants First Coalition organized tenants in subsidized housing developments around the state during the mid-1970's. Their organizing included building tenants unions at the High Point Village development in Roslindale, Camelot Court in Brighton, Brandywine development in East Boston, Battles Farm in Brockton, etc. Organizers included Barry Brodsky and Joe Cirincione and tenant leader Linda Garcia.

Emily Achtenberg of Urban Planning Aid wrote, "One of the most successful projects spawned by UPA was the Tenants First Coalition, an alliance of tenant unions in HUD-assisted developments owned by Max Kargman (including High Point Village in W. Roxbury, Brandywyne in E. Boston, Camelot Court in Brighton, Tammybrook in Weymouth, Mountain Village in Worcester, and Battles Farm in Brockton, Princeton Village in Lowell). These groups met regularly, published a joint newsletter, and organized rent strikes and blocked evictions. Joe Cirincione, the TFC staff organizer, subsequently became an internationally-recognized anti-nuclear expert for the Carnegie Institute and the Ploughshares Fund (and is married to Priscilla Labovitz, a former tenant/ labor attorney in Cambridge). Tenant leaders including Linda Garcia, Barry Brodsky, and Bernie Dougherty (now in JP) remained/ remain active in housing and community work.

- Kargman sued several tenant leaders, myself, and Mike Stone (co-author of Tenants First!), for seeking to deprive him of his private property. This led to years of litigation by Brian Olmsted and Mark Stern, and hardship for many of the tenants involved.

- Many years later, I met Max Kargman at a party at Howard Cohen's house, and he professed admiration for the work I have been doing with tenant and non-profit groups to acquire HUD-assisted properties. ( He was once a union organizer in Chicago.) The Kargman family has proved to be the most tenacious of the entire 60's cohort of owner/ developers, holding on to their properties to this day and maintaining them well. They have continued many of their project-based Section 8 subsidy contracts, but have strategically shifted to tenant-based vouchers in strong market locations. Despite offers of government assistance, they have not preserved their moderate income units at the end of the 40-year restricted period, allowing them to gradually convert to market rents."

- b. Massachusetts Tenants Organization (MTO) did tenant organizing in MHFA subsidized housing around the state in the 1980's and early 1990's, as well as leading a statewide campaign to preserve federally subsidized "expiring use" rental housing. MTO worked with state legislators and Congressman Barney Frank to pass national legislation that renews subsidies for owners choosing to extend the affordability of the apartments
- c. The MA Alliance of HUD Tenants have carried forward this organizing in subsidized housing. Michael Kane has directed these efforts for many, many decades following his earlier work on housing issues in the South End. They worked hard but unsuccessfully over many years to try to get a state law passed for rent control for subsidized housing.

There was a lot of successful organizing to preserve the affordability of this housing when it reached its 40 year mortgage conclusion; this is referred to as “Expiring Use”. Owners could then operate it as market rate housing which would have displaced most of the tenants. Organizing by the MA Alliance of HUD Tenants, other tenant groups, the CEDAC state agency, and support for members of Congress and state officials led to policies and funding that kept this housing affordable.

### **13. Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)**

They have always been present working with tenant groups during the 1969-1994 period where Boston had rent control, with subsidized housing tenants and Expiring Use issues, and with public housing tenant organizations and their issues. And since then they've continued this support to tenant organizations and tenants. Literally, generations of GBLS lawyers have worked on housing issues.

### **14. Urban Planning Aid (UPA) by Emily Achtenberg**

- “UPA was established in the late 1960s by a group of progressive architects and planners in the spirit of “advocacy planning” – including Chester Hartman (later denied tenure at Harvard for his role in the student strike), architect Bob Goodman, Danny Klubock (later a judge), Lisa Peattie (MIT urban anthropologist). Jim Morey, the original director, was a brilliant RAND corporate refugee (who later organized with Staughton Lynd in Gary, IND). UPA was one of 4 “community design centers” nationally that received OEO anti-poverty funding, although it strayed far from its original purpose to become a fierce ally/ advocate of groups engaged in community (and, we hoped, potential revolutionary) struggles.

- In the late 60s, UPA was instrumental in providing technical assistance to the broad coalition that stopped the Inner Belt and I-95 highway expansion. It produced critical studies exposing the displacement caused by urban renewal in the South End, symbolized by the Tent City sit-in, which led to the designation of sites for low income housing.

- In its heyday in the early 1970s, UPA was a staff-run collective of c. 25 people, with a central office in Cambridge and outposts in Lynn, Lowell, and Somerville. In addition to housing and transportation, we offered technical assistance to unions on health and safety issues, in an effort to build community-labor alliances in the primarily white working class neighborhoods where UPA was grounded. We ran the Community Press Service, a weekly packet of news, analysis, and graphics distributed to the proliferating network of community newspapers. We produced comprehensive guidebooks including “People for Property” (a manual for researching buildings and landlords), “Less Rent, More Control,” and “Tenants First!” (for tenant groups in HUD-assisted housing), as well as filmstrips and videos.

#### **Tenant/ Non-Profit Acquisitions**

- Many of the buildings that were targets of tenant activism in the '60s and '70s were eventually sold to tenant-involved, community-based non-profit organizations and preserved as long-term affordable housing—an important and enduring legacy of tenant organizing in and around Boston. In addition to the blocs of South End properties bought by IBA and TDC, the BURP buildings in

Roxbury/ Dorchester that were rehabilitated unsuccessfully by private developers as the Granite Properties were ultimately foreclosed by HUD, and resold to organizations like Nuestra Comunidad, Codman Square CDC, and Dorchester Bay EDC. North Canal Apartments in Lowell was transferred to CBA via deed in lieu of foreclosure.

- Clarendon Hill Towers in Somerville was one of many HUD-assisted projects sold to tenants under the federal preservation programs (ELIHPA and LIHPRHA) during the 1990s. Allston-Brighton CDC acquired Commonwealth-Glenville from former slumlords, one in jail (ask Bob Van Meter, then head of Allston-Brighton CDC). Despite the expiration of these programs, community-based non-profits working with tenants succeeded in purchasing many more at-risk HUD properties in the early 2000s, such as Pondview Apartments in JP (sold to JPNDC) and Westland Avenue Apartments in the Fenway (sold to Fenway CDC).

- Chapter 40T, the state's expiring use preservation law enacted in 2009 with strong tenant advocacy, provided new opportunities for tenant/ non-profit acquisition of HUD- and state-assisted properties, including Burbank Apartments in the Fenway (purchased by Fenway CDC) and Chapman Arms in Cambridge (a notorious Harvard-owned property with a history of tenant activism dating back to the 1970s, sold to HRI).

- And just to illustrate how this struggle continues, TDC (Tenant Development Corporation in the South End)—among the first tenant/ community-based organization to acquire privately-owned buildings in Boston--is currently fighting with predatory tax credit investors to keep the properties in community ownership, and permanently affordable.”

## **15. Cambridge**

### **a. Notes from conversation with Bill Cunningham from Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee (CTOC)**

- 1) Two groups organized for rent control in Cambridge in 1968. The Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, the anti-poverty organization. They held a Housing Convention in 1968 that 1000 attended where discussion of needing rent control came up. Also, the Cambridge Peace and Freedom Party worked for this too in 1968 and was led by people in Progressive Labor Party of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).
- 2) Rent control came up during the 1967 Mayoral election....Boston and Brookline passed local laws for rent regulation. These were overturned by the courts on the basis of the Legislature had to enact such a law or pass a law enabling communities to do this. The case for this was argued by James St. Clair, the lawyer famous for both taking on Joe McCarthy but also for representing Richard Nixon during Watergate.
- 3) Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee (CTOC) formed in the spring of 1970. It focused on tenant organizing and blocking evictions.
- 4) The State Rent Control enabling law, Chapter 842 passed in August 1970.
- 5) It came before the Cambridge City Council and was passed September 17, 1970 by a 7-2 vote.
- 6) There was a 3 month freeze on wages, prices, rents August-September 1970 done by President Nixon.
- 7) After the 1970 election when more pro-tenant Councilors were elected, it was repealed in late December 1970.

- 8) Massive tenant organizing followed and the City Council had to held hearings in schools since the Council Chamber was too small...4 hearings were held and rent control was reinstated before the end of January 1971.
- 9) By around 1977 CTOC disbanded as did the Cambridgeport Homeowners and Tenants Organization (Steve Meacham, later at City Life, had been with them). Then the Cambridge Rent Control Coalition formed and the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants during the 1980's.
- 10) Cambridge City Councilor David Sullivan led passage of the Removal Permit law that made it hard to evict tenants for condo conversion.
- 11) Cambridge landlords placed a referendum to end rent control on the 1989 ballot called Proposition 1, 2, 3 and it was defeated by a 2-1 margin.
- 12) For the Statewide referendum in 1994 to remove rent control, it started with Cambridge landlords including Skip Schloming and Lorraine Schloming and their Small Property Owners Association and Denise Jillson, but the campaign was taken over by statewide real estate groups. Signatures to qualify it for the ballot were done by paid signature gatherers.

SEE ALSO, this pretty lengthy and interesting Shelterforce article in 1996 about rent control history in Cambridge up through the 1994 vote to abolish it and some early post-vote organizing like the Eviction Free Zone that Steve Meacham helped organize way back then.

<https://shelterforce.org/1995/03/01/25-years-ago-tenants-organized-formed-coalitions-took-to-the-streets-and-won-rent-control-in-massachusetts/>

- b. David Sullivan remembers: "The Cambridge Removal Permit Ordinance passed 5-4 in 1979. I drafted it and lobbied for it as a leader of the Alliance of Cambridge Tenants, but I wasn't elected to the City Council until later in 1979. The Ordinance said that a landlord could not remove a rent-controlled apartment from the rental market (such as by condo conversion, demolition, etc.) without getting a removal permit -- which was intentionally almost impossible to get -- from the Rent Control Board. In 1981, the state Supreme Judicial Court unanimously upheld the Ordinance. So did the United States Supreme Court, in 1983 (with only then-Justice Rehnquist dissenting). With some amendments to close loopholes, the Ordinance remained in effect until the state voters repealed rent control in 1994. During that 15-year period, it essentially stopped condo conversions and resulting evictions."

## 16. Somerville

- a. Steve Miller remembers, "The Somerville Tenant's Union (STU) was started in 1969 or '70 by Jane Schull and a couple of others (I think mostly from Brandeis), to mobilize low-income women around issues of immediate relevance -- inspired by the Newark ERAP effort. I'm not sure when Urban Planning Aid started providing support, perhaps from the start or (more likely) soon after in combination with some VISTA slots. Carol Hughes, a Somerville mom, was one of the people who got involved early on. I spent my first year after college (fall of 1970-summer 1971) working in public housing in Lynn, and then switched to the STU in 1971 to work with Jane and her crew and then stayed as Jill Goldstein, Sharon Kurtz, and Stu Gedal joined the staff. I had known Jim Kaplan from my year abroad in London ('68-'69) and when he returned to the US to live in Somerville, he gravitated into the STU as well. There was a period where

several other local working class people became core activists: Eileen Stevenson and Karl Ackerman. I switched in the mid-1970s to working with UPA's Occupational Health & Safety Group which eventually created MassCOSH."

b. Jim Kaplan remembers:

"(1) The campaign to pass the Chapter 842 enabling law in Somerville occurred before I got active in the Somerville Tenants' Union in 1971/1972.

(2) The early leaders of the Somerville Tenants' Union were Steve Miller to c.1973, and Sharon Kurtz (deceased), Jill Goldstein (possibly deceased), and Carol Hughes ongoing.

(3) It was repealed in late 1978 or early 1979 after the November 1977 election and January 1978 inauguration of Mayor Tom August, following the initiative on the Board of Aldermen by then-Alderman Michael Capuano. More details by phone conversation.

My files on the STU, very detailed with complete sets of minutes of meetings, of public leaflets, and of the STU newspaper were donated to the University of Massachusetts at Boston Library archives and are on file there for public access."

c. Danny LeBlanc from Somerville United Neighborhoods (SUN) remembers:

"(1) The Somerville Board of Alderman vote to end rent control took place December 1978 and took effect March 1979. This 2019 article from the Tufts Daily recounts that history a bit and it links to a 1979 Harvard Crimson article which also link below.

<https://tuftsdaily.com/news/2019/12/02/citing-surgin-housing-costs-somerville-state-politicians-advocate-rent-control/#:~:text=Somerville%20implemented%20rent%20control%20in,a%201979%20Harvard%20Crimson%20article>.

<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1979/3/3/somerville-rent-control-ends-tenants-await/>

(2) SUN worked really actively to create Somerville first condo control ordinance in 1980 and succeeded in passing it that fall (I have a distinct memory of turning out 50-100 people every single week that summer for one meeting/hearing or another, mostly at city hall!). That apparently led to the #1 resolution adopted at the April 1981 SUN congress to be reinstatement of rent control. From that point forward SUN and STU waged a campaign that ultimately led to a 7-4 losing vote at the Board of Aldermen May 1982."

## 17. Brookline

Adopted by vote of Town Meeting in the fall of 1970, rolling back rents to what they had been in March 1970. Brookline adopted rent control under the state enabling act, Chapter 842, along with an additional by-law under Brookline's own Home Rule enabling act, Chapter 843, covering two and three-family owner-occupied homes, which were exempt under Chapter 842. That by-law was repealed a year or so later related to the coverage of owner-occupied homes but Brookline had rent control through the 1994 referendum.

Herb Goodwin and Sumner Kaplan worked for its adoption. Joanne Blumsack too and she worked on passage of the state enabling law in 1970. Ned Epstein was a leader in the Brookline Tenants Union.

A form of vacancy decontrol was adopted in the early 1990's.

## **18. Waltham**

Lee Staples from MA Fair Share remembers: "I organized a rent control campaign in Waltham back in 1974 (or possibly '75). We did systematic door-knocking all over the Southside, with local meetings throughout most of the area. We also utilized a sort of Sponsoring Committee that included some clergy & other middle class supporters (ex. Norm Faramelli & his wife Lucie were key). Initially we gathered some support from several City Council members, got an ordinance proposed, brought folks to testify at a public hearing, but ultimately lost (5 -2? 6-3? – don't remember).

We then held a press conference & issued a fact sheet to kick off an initiative petition drive campaign to put RC on the ballot for the citywide election in November. We did gather the requisite signatures, held several momentum building events & did GOTV with good energy.

The pushback from the Landlord's Association was immense. They *literally* had posters & newspaper ads showing pictures of ravaged buildings in the **South Bronx** claiming that this would happen to the city if RC passed. The Waltham Tribune came out against us, but we did have some positive coverage from a reporter (I think his name was Bill Finucane sp.) who may have had some connection to ownership.

Anyway, we actually carried the Southside by a 3-2 margin, but got destroyed by homeowners on the Northside (3 -1 w. heavier turnout) who bought into the argument that taxes would rise & property values would decline."

## **19. Salem**

### **Salem Tenant Organizing (1985-1990 )**

Ray Gagne Director of Essex County Community Organization back then wrote this: "The Essex County Community Organization (ECCO) and the North Shore Community Action Agency (NSCAP) did extensive tenant organizing in Salem during the 1980's. In the mid 1980's ECCO and NSCAP attempted to pass a Rent Review Ordinance modeled after Lowell. They mounted an aggressive campaign but lost on a City Council vote of 5-5-1. Organizers attributed the loss to the inability to build a city-wide tenant organization that reached into all of Salem's wards. ECCO had a large base of support in the Point Neighborhood (Ward 5) but a smaller base of support in other wards. ECCO's Ward 5 base was not enough to overcome the power of the real estate lobby.

After the loss ECCO and NSCAP decided to switch its tactics and work on more winnable issues such as code enforcement and the promotion of affordable housing. ECCO organized rooming house tenants to improve building conditions. They also negotiated with the landlord of the largest rooming house in Salem (the Lincoln Hotel) to apply for state rental vouchers for 1/3 of the building. The victory insured that the building would remain as affordable housing. ECCO and NSCAP also led a multi-year campaign to get the city to crack down on code violations in the buildings owned by Fred Small one of the largest landlords in the Point Neighborhood. The campaign ultimately evolved into an effort to convert the Fred Small buildings into non-profit

housing. Years of aggressive organizing led to the buildings being purchased by Salem Harbor CDC. The most dramatic event was a multi-day protest at a foreclosure auction for the Fred Small buildings. The protest dissuaded private landlords from bidding on the property and opened the door for the Salem Harbor CDC to purchase the buildings. Over 100 units were preserved and served as an anchor to keep the Point Neighborhood affordable for low- income tenants.

### **Peabody Mobile Home Organizing (1985-1990)**

The Essex County Community Organization (ECCO) waged an aggressive organizing campaign in the late 1980's to reverse the mobile home parks in Peabody. Park owners were not happy with Peabody's rent control law and some threatened to close their parks. ECCO worked with Steve Wasserman a local attorney and the Mass Tenants Organization MTO to pass a Massachusetts Discontinuance Permit Law. The law gave tenants significant leverage against park closings. Half the parks have become tenant cooperatives. (See above)

ECCO was able to build organizing committees in all the Peabody Mobile Parks and create an umbrella organization representing the entire city. The leadership of the city-wide group was phenomenal. They sponsored Action meetings with 300 or 400 people and generate hundreds of calls to elected officials. Voter turnout rates in the parks was also very high which gave tenants further power.

The mobile home organizing was a high stakes affair. Mobile home tenants could lose their homes if an owner closed a park. The tenants owned their mobile home and the park owner owned the land. There was virtually nowhere to move a mobile home park. Despite the crisis the mobile tenants organized a remarkable campaign that served as a model for tenants across the country.

Note: ECCO's mobile organizing occurred simultaneously with their organizing in the Point Neighborhood.

ECCO Organizers for the above Salem and/or Peabody organizing include: Ray Gagne, Brenda Marotto-Potvin, Peter Cox, Wilfredo Bolivar, Elizabeth Meir (and Don Meglio from MTO) helped on the mobile homes organizing) Thanks to Mark Potvin, Director of North Shore Community Action Program for his work on this too."

<https://www.brewittfuneralhome.com/obituaries/obituary-listings?obId=21653625>

## **20. Worcester**

Judy Jacobson remembers: "I worked at Worcester Tenants Association (which changed its name to the Housing Information Center at some point along the way) from 1979-1981. We were active in MTO on the statewide campaigns on condo conversion legislation and smoke detector law. The focus was on education for tenants & landlords and we did some work helping people buy & fix up abandoned buildings. The organizing was building-by-building. I don't remember any local tenants rights law campaigns but I do remember advocacy around getting a Housing Court in Worcester. Maribeth Perry, who retired from the Lawyers Clearinghouse in the last year or two, worked there after I did. And Paul Groesbeck, ran it when I was there and may have started it."

## **IV. Just Some of the Major Absentee Landlords in the Past and their Organizations**



The Greater Boston Real Estate Board had been the major organization for absentee landlords during these years. A division of it called the Rental Housing Association (RHA) focuses on that portion of its work. The president of the RHA who usually serves for one year reads like a who's who of major landlords.

1. Jerome Rappaport--He was the owner of the Charles River Park apartments which were the high end apartments built when the West End neighborhood was demolished for urban renewal. Rappaport has been a force in city politics for many decades and at one time when there were 9 at-large city councilors, he was referred to as the "10th city councilor" because of his clout with the City Council and his campaign contributions. Rappaport led an effort to get his own buildings exempted from the city's rent control laws in 1974 and to prevent passage and strengthening of the city's rent control and condo conversion laws during the 1980's.
2. Harold Brown--owner of Hamilton Realty. He was famous for paying a person to attend and spy on meetings of tenants in his buildings who were meeting as the Hamilton Tenants Union. He also hired a convicted arsonist, Robert Ward, to work on his property management staff. Albert Benson, another convicted arsonist, was also associated with Brown, Brown used his residential property holdings in Allston-Brighton to later become a major owner of downtown Boston office buildings. He was also involved in a famous case where he accused then Senate President Bulger's law partner of seeking a bribe from him on a development project at 75 State Street office building.
3. Leonard Samia--a major owner of property beginning in the Allston-Brighton area. He was famous or infamous for large rent increases and condo conversions. A famous poster showed his picture and the caption, "Wanted for Displacement and Gentrification". His behavior continued as he was the subject of a lengthy Boston Globe article in 2006 about evicting tenants in Louisiana to take advantage of being able to charge high rents after Hurricane Katrina damaged much housing there.
4. Maurice Gordon--He was perhaps the most famous absentee landlord of the 1960's operating rental apartments around the city and then also owning office buildings. He sold many of his buildings to Harold Brown during the 1970's.
5. Irwin Cantor--He was a major owner of subsidized housing and other apartments in Dorchester and Roxbury. Once when he was mad about what the federal HUD area office were doing, he went to their office in downtown Boston and left the deed to one property in the "In Box" of the receptionist.
6. Sidney Insoft and Maurice Simon—They led Gem Realty which owned most of the thousands of units subsidized housing developed under the BURP program in the later 1960's. Boston Gas was a major investor in this effort which also led to their biggest increase in customers ever as the units were converted to from oil to gas heat during these renovations. Boston Gas President Eli Goldston called this "doing well while doing good." Insoft and Simon owned thousands of units in Roxbury and Dorchester that became the Granite Properties and these were later renovated under an MHFA program after HUD took back ownership from Insoft and Simon.

7. George Wattendorf--Wattendorf owned some 2000 units in Dorchester, much of which he inherited from his parents. Wattendorf's houses were easy to spot as always the most run down on a street. He filed a case against the Dorchester Tenants Action Council, Mayor White, and 150 of his tenants in federal court to try to stop tenants organizing efforts but the suit was thrown out.

At one point when being pursued for warrants for code violations and unpaid taxes, police chased him for many miles while he was driving a camper trailer (he was an earlier OJ Simpson in the bronco). Wattendorf's son-in-law ,Joe Tibbetts, ran the business for some years during the early 1970's. Tibbetts, a Harvard graduate, had been given some properties by Wattendorf while even still a student. Some code violation notices were sent to Joseph Tibbetts at Quincy House at Harvard University. Tibbetts, who lived in Scituate, was later indicted for filing false property claims for damages during the Blizzard of 1978. Tibbetts, who despite his Harvard degree could step in it, once was quoted in the Boston Globe in an article title "Pass the Plate for Joe's Rents" by reporter Ken Hartnett, as saying, "I may be a slumlord, but I'm going to be the best slumlord yet." Decades later, a George Wattendorf, Jr. was indicted for fraud as a contractor. At first he denied he was the son of George Wattendorf despite his name being George Wattendorf, Jr. I kid you not.

When some buildings Wattendorf owned became so run down that he abandoned them, Wattendorf would sometimes transfer ownership into the name of a former tenant or repairman. A transfer like this does not require their signature. This strategy led to Wattendorf not paying for demolition costs as the city would have to demolish the building and usually could not find the person Wattendorf had transferred the building to.

8. Joe Venezia--He was the owner of Geneva Realty with many buildings in Dorchester.. Once before a rent increase hearing at Boston City Hall where the Dorchester Tenants Action Council had organized 30 of his tenants to attend, Venezia confronted DTAC organizer Lew Finfer and said he couldn't talk to "his" tenants. When Finfer said he had the right to do that, Venezia punched him and then proceeded into the rent increase hearing which was a tumultuous hearing following that attack . A complaint was filed in court against Venezia and the tenant group thought they should win since they had so many witnesses to his assault. Venezia astounded the tenants when he came to court with his leg in a cast and claimed Finfer and had pushed him down the stairs during the fracas. Judge Adlow ruled, "this man has all the witnesses and this other man sustained a big injury, case dismissed."
9. SPOA (Small Property Owners Association) Organize with mass mailings, etc....bend the facts to rile people up to oppose tenants rights legislation. Also send them to homeowners and say their taxes will go up if tenants rights legislation is adopted. Skip and Lorraine Schloming are leaders of SPOA.

## **V. Just a few of the "Famous Tenant" Leaders from**

## the Past

1. Anita Bromberg was a long time leader in tenant organizations in Allston-Brighton during the 1960's through the 1990's. Her rent increase was the first case at the Boston Rent Control agency in 1969.

When her apartment had terrible leaks for months that the owner wouldn't fix, she called in a city housing inspector. When the inspector tried to avoid writing up the violation by saying although there were obvious severe leak stains but no moisture on them that day, Anita threw a bucket of water where the leak was coming from and told the inspector he wasn't leaving until he wrote up the violation.

While lobbying for extension of the rent control enabling law in 1975 at the State House, she started cursing under her breath when a New Bedford state senator indicated he was against this. A then young tenant organizer named Lew Finfer who was with Bromberg at this meeting moved to get the swearing Bromberg out of the state senator's office. Bromberg then showed her motherly side and said, "Lew, you look tired. Let's go to the cafeteria and get you some milk and cookies." Anita's grandson, Mike Firestone, was a top aide to Attorney General Maura Healey and is now Mayor Wu's Policy Director.

See also at the beginning of this paper the account of her being the first cased at the Boston Rent Board in 1969.

2. Hester Hurlbutt—Hester was one of the first facing condo conversion eviction in the Back Bay in the 1980's when in her 80's. She was a dignified Yankee dowager figure and frequent testifier at Boston City Council hearings on these issues.
3. Agnes Plantagenest — A woman in her 80's facing eviction for condo conversion at the Garrison Hall Apartments in the 1980's was also a delight with her humor and activism and French accent, and she lived into her 90's.
4. Evelyn Randall — She was evicted for one condo conversion and became a tenant leader who organized seniors during the 1982 and 1984 campaigns of MTO. She then became a leader in Fenway CDC and a volunteer for City Councilor Scondras and Mayor Flynn. Her memorial service in 2004 brought together Scondras and Flynn despite their then differences on the gay marriage issue.
5. Willie Harrison was an African-American tenant leader in Dorchester Tenants Action Council in the early 1970's. She lived in an Irwin Cantor owned building (see above). She taught us about Mayor Curley helping the poor in Boston.

## **VI. Rent Control is STILL IN EFFECT FOR MOBILE HOMEOWNERS IN 21 COMMUNITIES IN MA**

Belchertown, Bernardston, Boston, Brookfield, Cheshire, Chicopee, Dalton, Merrimac, Ludlow, Middleboro, North Adams, North Reading, Orange, Palmer, Peabody, Pittsfield, Raynham, Rockland, Salisbury, Springfield, Wales

<https://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/lt1-chapter-16-mobile-homes.pdf>

## **PARK CLOSINGS AND 2 YEAR NOTICE and RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL TO PURCHASE**

If a park owner wants to close the park, they must give you at least 2 years notice. If you move in during that 2-year period, they must tell you before you rent. If at least half the tenants form a tenant association, you have the “right of first refusal.” The park owner must offer to sell the park to your group before selling to anyone else.

Additionally, a **Discontinuance Permit Law** governs closing (“discontinuing”) mobile home parks to build something else on the land. This pro-tenant Law requires the park owner to obtain a permit from the city council prior to evicting the tenants; the City Council must use standards set in the law which are difficult for an owner to meet. In practice that leads to negotiation with tenants who can reject developments that would leave them homeless. And Tenants have the Right of First Refusal to purchase their mobile home parks, see above.

**Mobile Home Park Cooperatives:** About 1/2 the mobile home parks in Peabody have become cooperatively owned by the tenants.

--Salem attorney Steve Wasserman was instrumental in that process of conversion to cooperative ownership and in writing and passage of the above mentioned Discontinuance Permit Law.

--Essex County Community Organization (ECCO) worked on organizing and supporting mobile home tenants in Peabody in the 1980's.

--Massachusetts Tenants Organization (MTO) worked on some of the organizing to support passage of some of the local rent control laws and the statewide Right of First Refusal law in the early 1980's. Don Meglio and John McDonough worked on this.

John McDonough, Co-Director of MTO in the early 1980's said this about the mobile home tenants, “I think I interacted with a dozen, Chelmsford the most -- they made me an honorary lifetime member of their community. The communities learned quickly to rely on their local state reps, who were delighted to lend a hand, because it was hundreds of attention paying voters vs. just one owner (who usually was a jerk). These were working class folks, lots of Vietnam veterans, salt of the earth people, living in these really cramped communities. Boy did they know each other.”

**The Boston mobile homes are in West Roxbury** at 1515 VFW Parkway. There are 104 sites for residents. They utilized the rent control law to protect tenants from large rent increases for decades. In 2011, the tenants making up the Boston Trailer Park Tenants Association purchased the park and there are restrictions to maintain this as affordable housing. Residents were aided by funding from the City of Boston and the non-profit Community Builders.

Ray Gagne, Director of Essex County Community Organization back then wrote this:  
**Peabody Mobile Home Organizing (1985-1990)**

The Essex County Community Organization (ECCO) waged an aggressive organizing campaign in the late 1980's to reverse the mobile home parks in Peabody. Park owners were not happy with Peabody's rent control law and some threatened to close their parks. ECCO worked with Steve Wasserman a local attorney and the Mass Tenants Organization MTO to pass a Massachusetts Discontinuance Permit Law. The law gave tenants significant leverage against park closings. Half the parks have become tenant cooperatives. (See above)

ECCO was able to build organizing committees in all the Peabody Mobile Parks and create an umbrella organization representing the entire city. The leadership of the city-wide group was phenomenal. They sponsored Action meetings with 300 or 400 people and generate hundreds of calls to elected officials. Voter turnout rates in the parks was also very high which gave tenants further power.

The mobile home organizing was a high stakes affair. Mobile home tenants could lose their homes if an owner closed a park. The tenants owned their mobile home and the park owner owned the land. There was virtually nowhere to move a mobile home park. Despite the crisis the mobile tenants organized a remarkable campaign that served as a model for tenants across the country.

## **VII. Public Housing which has rent limits and Tenants Organizing in Public Housing**

Public housing tenants pay 25% of their income for rent (later raised to 30%) under a law called the Brook Amendment after Massachusetts Senator Ed Brooke who led the passage of this in Congress. So that's a form of rent control.

There is a long history of tenant organizations in individual public housing developments, in citywide public housing tenant organizations, and in senior public housing. Prior to 1980, the Mayor appointed 4 of the 5 board members of the Boston Housing Authority and effectively chose its director. Developments have different funding sources and regulations based on whether they were built originally with state funds or federal funds.

Three board members of the Boston Housing Authority formed what was called the "tenant-oriented majority" in the early 1970's and feuded with Mayor White who had appointed two of the three to these positions. The three were Doris Bunte, a tenant in public housing who was later to be the director of the BHA under Mayor Flynn, John Connally, a South Boston public housing tenant who was later to be an advisor on development to Mayor Flynn, and Julius Bernstein, who headed the Jewish Labor Committee and was active on civil rights and labor issues. Mayor White went after Doris Bunte accusing her of abusing some reimbursement procedure and tried unsuccessfully to remove her from her position. There was even a kind of trial of Doris Bunte at the Boston City Council.

In the 1970's conditions in BHA housing deteriorated due to lack of priority by the Mayor and lack of sufficient federal and state funding.. A court suit brought by tenants called the Perez case, where tenants were represented by Greater Boston Legal Services, resulted in a decision by Superior Court Judge Paul Garrity around 1980 in the appointment of a receiver. Harry Spence was named receiver and ran the Housing

Authority well for several years.. Judge Paul Garrity then named Mayor Flynn receiver and authorized his appointment of Doris Bunte as BHA Administrator (the same Doris Bunte that Mayor White had tried to remove from the BHA Board and who later served as a State Representative. The receivership remained in effect until 1989, when the Legislature formally abolished the BHA's Board of Commissioners and replaced it with the Mayor's direct authority for the Administrator and established a tenant-majority Monitoring Committee to review BHA operations; final orders entered in Perez case were in 1990.

David Cortiella and several Mission Hill tenants chained themselves to a pipe at the Mission Hill development office in a protest against living conditions in the 1980's. Cortiella would later be named director of the BHA in the late 1990's and go on to help develop affordable housing in other cities.

Most developments had and still have elected tenant task forces which had a role in issues affecting their developments and were part of the citywide Tenants Policy Council (TPC). Tenants United for Public Housing Progress (TUPHP) emerged as an important citywide tenants group in the 1980's. It waged a campaign for passage of a state law preventing the sale of public housing. The Committee for Boston Public Housing, directed by Mary Lassen for many years, was also organized in the 1980's and also did tenant organizing in a number of developments organizing on social service and job issues affecting tenants.

Tenant leaders like Barbara Mellen at West Broadway in South Boston, Hattie Dudley at Mission Hill Extension, Maria Sanchez from Mission Hill Main, Mary MacInnes at Bunker Hill in Charlestown, were some of the many tenant leaders from that period.

Massachusetts Senior Action Council did extensive public housing tenant organizing in senior public housing developments beginning in the mid-1980's and continues that now.

The federal housing department HUD has run a program to change public housing into less dense and multi-income developments. This program was called Hope VI and offered extensive funds to renovate current projects, including demolishing of high rises. The positives are the renovation funds, the lesser concentration of units, the mixed income developments. The negatives are in cities with little affordable housing units, this loss of affordable units is not helpful (in some cases the number of low income units is not reduced but many market rate units are added). Boston has received Hope VI funding for Mission Hill and some other developments in Boston. Columbia Point in Dorchester became Harbor Point, a mixed income development as have the Fidelis Way public housing development in Brighton. This is planned now for Bunker Hill in Charlestown and Old Colony in South Boston.

HUD did not continue the program for grants for major capital repairs to public housing and only offered these funds if the developments became mixed income.

## **VIII. Drafting Rent Control Laws**

### **1. Rent increases**

System can include:

- a) an annual rent increase for all tenants of X %  
and/or

b) case by case rent increase decisions based on a Fair Net Operating Income formula

Most laws include provisions for a Fair Net Operating Income, sometimes it describes this formula and sometimes it just says such a regulation will be implemented.

A tricky question is how to deal with major repairs/capital improvements.....you want landlords to make major repairs but in some cases if they make them and they weren't really needed, then the tenants will have to pay a larger rent increase.

## **2. Evictions**

Most rent control laws also include what's called a Just Cause for Eviction standard that the landlord has to say and prove one of a list of reasons.....non-payment of rent, destruction of the apartment, the landlord's immediate family wanting to move in... I think there's an option of the local Rent Board holding eviction hearings using the Just Cause standard and the landlord must win there to be able to proceed on the eviction in court.

There may be an option that the Just Cause standard must be used by the court for cases for a law like Boston would have.

## **3. Who to exempt from the law?**

a) Most law exempt owner occupied 2 and 3 family homes. Some even go up to 6 family owner occupied homes.

b) Some laws exempt new construction and some don't. Opponents of rent control charge it will stop new construction even if the law says it isn't covered. Most new construction starts at higher rent market housing and that's only mitigated if there's also an Inclusionary Development Policy requiring a % of market rate housing to be affordable. But there's a case to not cover this so our housing supply grows.

**NOTE:** Many cities in California, New Jersey, and New York have rent control laws so that can provide models and language to consider too,

**IX. With appreciation of the current tenant organizing being done now to protect and increase tenants rights by these organizations:** City Life/Vida Urbana, Lynn United for Change, Chinese Progressive Association, La Colaboarativa (formerly the Chelsea Collaborative), New England United for Justice, MA Alliance of HUD Tenants, Springfield No One Leaves, Boston Tenant Coalition, et al.

## **Acknowledgements:**

I want to acknowledge and thank the following people I spoke to who added information on different parts of this history in different cities:

Boston--Mike Fogelberg, Michael Kane, Mac McCreight, Dan Manning, Jim Creamer, Diane Gordon, Meir Lakein, Emily Achtenberg

Somerville--Jim Kaplan, Steve Miller, Danny LeBlanc

Cambridge--Bill Cunningham, David Sullivan

Lowell---Alan Solomont, Charlie Gargiulo, Bob Van Meter

Lynn—Steve Wasserman, Miles Rapoport, Joel Feigenbaum  
Waltham---Lew Staples  
Brookline—Joe Ross, John Businger  
Salem—Ray Gagne  
Peabody--Ray Gagne, Steve Wasserman  
Worcester—Judy Jacobson

**NOTE:** By the nature of the passage of time, failures of my memory, and inability to contact people involved in many of the events mentioned here, this has to be an incomplete record of events, but hopefully does record some of the work that many people did through these organizations to try to improve rights for tenants during those years. I apologize for not listing all of the tenant organizations, the tenant organizers, the tenant leaders.

And people are encouraged to send corrections and suggested additions to this history.

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**NOTE:** Lew Finfer worked as an organizer for the Dorchester Tenants Action Council 1970-1973 and later was Co-Director and Director of Massachusetts Tenants Organization from 1980-1984.



