



E
organizing@baytanc.com
510-463-7702
www.baytanc.com

Organized Tenants Escalate Demands For Habitable Housing in Publicly-Subsidized Downtown Oakland Apartments

On Monday, Apr. 4, the Fox Courts Tenant Council (FCTC) escalated demands for habitable housing and an end to chronic neglect and harassment at Fox Courts, an 80-unit low-income apartment complex in downtown Oakland owned by publicly-subsidized Berkeley developer Resources for Community Development (RCD) and managed by John Stewart Company (JSC).

Comprising working-class, predominantly immigrant households and others, the Fox Courts Tenant Council (FCTC) formed amid the pandemic last fall, as manager John Stewart Company (JSC) continued to ignore or retaliate against tenants for individually advocating for themselves. In November, FCTC described building conditions in its first demand letter (**attached**) to JSC:

The stench from overburdened trash areas and garbage and human waste accumulating in neglected hallways and stairwells is nauseating. Key fobs do not work. The elevator is broken for weeks at a time, impairing mobility-limited residents' access to their homes and services.

Inside our units, more hazards: Broken light fixtures. Toxic carpet. Stoves and other appliances are broken and malfunctioning. Plumbing issues unabated for years. Rampant mold. This you already know: We have complained and even filed work-orders that remain unacknowledged.

These severe habitability issues, many of them reported to and confirmed by city code enforcement, are exacerbating serious medical issues, including asthma and eczema, for healthy adults and our most vulnerable residents: the disabled, elderly, children and infants.

The tenant council, affiliated with Tenant and Neighborhood Councils (TANC), a Bay Area-wide autonomous tenant union, forced JSC managers to negotiate over demands including regular maintenance of common space; immediate habitability repairs; accountable, available and respectful management; and building-wide rent reductions reflecting the decreased services.

Under pressure, JSC committed to fulfilling various demands, and Fox Courts tenants have observed some improvements with respect to work-orders and trash disposal in addition to the removal of the on-site property manager. But in recent weeks JSC has issued rent increases, and many demands remain outstanding, prompting the council to pressure building owner RCD.

“We have reached an impasse in negotiations with John Stewart Company management,” the council writes in its Apr. 4 letter to RCD (**attached**), listing fifteen demands for the Berkeley-based developer and landlord. “Now we raise our demands to you, the building developer and owner, who is just as responsible for conditions here as JSC management.”

RCD, with annual revenue of more than \$15 million, according to 2020 tax returns, presents itself as a progressive, mission-driven nonprofit organization as it receives grants and other public subsidies to develop and collect rent from low-income apartment buildings such as Fox Courts, often partnering with for-profit manager JSC at properties rife with egregious conditions.

In San Francisco, court records show JSC was one of the top evictors during the pandemic, exploiting “health and safety” loopholes in eviction restrictions to force tenants onto the streets.

Last year at Embarc, another JSC-managed and RCD-owned property in Oakland, residents formed the Embarc Veteran Tenant Association. The Embarc tenants successfully pressured management to rescind illegal 15-day pay or quit notices issued during the eviction moratorium.

In San Jose, tenants of the JSC-managed Renascent Place, owned by Charities Housing and opened in 2020, have also reported eviction notices, lockouts, and other forms of harassment.

Find example conditions documentation (attached) on the next page below. Fox Courts Tenant Council and Tenant and Neighborhood Councils organizers are available for media interviews.

###

The Tenant and Neighborhood Councils (TANC) is an autonomous tenant union with hundreds of members, dozens of affiliated councils and several neighborhood-based locals. The member-run organization stands against the capitalist housing system and aims to stop landlords, developers and police from continuing to loot and exploit our communities.

The Fox Courts Tenant Council (FCTC) formed in the publicly-subsidized, 80-unit apartment complex Fox Courts amid the pandemic in Fall, 2021 to address chronic neglect and harassment by John Stewart Company (JSC) and Resources for Community Development (RCD). The council collectively demands safe, clean and dignified building conditions.



Clockwise from top left: Soiled stairwells, broken alarms, overloaded trash, stained hallways.