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**TENANTS PROTEST RENT GOUGING BY CORPORATE SPECULATORS
IN REDWOOD CITY**

Speculators impose rent increases of up to \$800+ immediately after purchasing two apartment buildings providing homes for 20 families

Redwood City, CA – Residents of two apartment buildings near downtown Redwood City are protesting rent increases of up to and exceeding \$800 imposed by their new corporate landlords. The twenty families living in the apartments received rent increases on the same day that the new owners informed the residents of the purchase. Many of the tenants have formed a tenants' association and will demand that the new owners reduce the amount of the rent increases so they will not be displaced from their homes.

“Our family’s rent went up more than \$850, which is almost a 45% increase, and it was a complete shock,” said Stephanie Gutierrez, a 15-year-old resident of one of the buildings who is leading the organizing. “My parents didn’t get an \$850 raise, so how are we supposed to pay this? We love it here in Redwood City, but this rent increase may force us out of our own community.”

The two apartment buildings, located at 1207 Hopkins Avenue and 1404 Regent Street in Redwood City, were both purchased on November 29, 2017. Property records show the new owners as CREI, LLC and Menlo Gate Group Two Holding, LLC – each listed with the same address. Both corporations list Jesshill E. Love III as their registered agent, and both have hired Redwood Landing Properties to manage the buildings. The two buildings were purchased for a combined total of \$8,550,000, or \$425,500 per unit.

The purchases were financed in large part by two loans from First Republic Bank. First Republic previously faced criticism for financing Ellis Act evictions in San Francisco.

“We are committed to fighting back when speculators and corporations exploit our community like their personal ATM machine,” said Rafael Avendano, Director of the Siena Center of the St. Francis Center, who is assisting the tenants’ association with the protest.

“This case highlights the broader problem of speculation that is fueling displacement throughout the Bay Area,” said Daniel Saver, a Senior Attorney with Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto. “Officials in Redwood City have failed to adopt tenant protections that could have prevented this sort of displacement, especially in lower-income communities and communities of color. We need our elected representatives to prioritize homes for people, not profits.”

The protest will begin at 5:30 pm at the corporate office of the new landlords and management company, located at 1526 Stafford Street, Redwood City, 94063.

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