

St. Pete Mayor Hopeful Assists Local Renters Avoid Eviction

While thousands fall behind on rent, the City sits on more than \$8 million in aid. Mayoral candidate Vince Nowicki works to help those in need access funds.

ST. PETERBURG, FLORIDA, USA, March 13, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While thousands of St. Pete tenants fall further behind on rent as a result of Covid-19-related financial hardships, many facing eviction, the City sits on more than \$8 million in federal rental assistance funds as local government officials determine how to distribute aid.

As March 31st marks the end of the CDC's nationwide eviction moratorium, a great number of local renters fear what the end of the month will bring. However, for many tenants, the devastating reality of eviction has already come knocking on their door. In spite of the moratorium, since April 2nd more than 3,440 residential eviction and unlawful detainer cases have been filed in Pinellas County.

Mayoral candidate [Vince Nowicki](#) stresses, "While the issue of eviction may seem like it only affects a small portion of the population, that's not the case. It touches all of our lives. The lack of affordable housing sits at the root of a multitude of social problems, from poverty, homelessness and crime to educational disparities and health care". Nowicki emphasizes, "Understanding and preventing eviction is critical to addressing widespread socio-economic issues that plague our community".

Pinellas County is not alone in the eviction epidemic sweeping the state, earning Florida a 0.5 out of 5 rating in Covid-19 Housing Policy from Princeton University's Eviction Lab. "Without further action, Florida could see a surge of evictions during and following the pandemic," cautions the Eviction Lab.

Fortunately, aid for tenants and their landlords is now available thanks to the \$25 billion federal Emergency Rental Assistance ("ERA") program that was approved December 27, 2020 to assist households that are unable to pay rent and/or utilities as a result of unemployment, underemployment, or financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the program is to prevent homelessness and maintain housing stability. From this \$25 billion pool, the City of St. Petersburg received over \$8 million of emergency rental relief funds at the end of January.

Nowicki remarks, "Getting this money out of the City coffers and into the hands of those in need

is a win-win-win scenario for tenants, landlords, and the community. There is no time to waste”.

Yet, for many residents, this aid will be too little and too late – as the number of eviction notices keeps growing and the rate at which the City is disbursing these much-needed funds isn’t keeping pace. So far, the City has approved two organizations to take applications and administer aid – [Catholic Charities](#) and [Boley Centers](#). Each group was allotted \$500,000 to provide direct assistance to applicants, leaving millions of dollars to be disbursed “at a future date,” per the City Council’s resolution.

Unfortunately, many of those in dire need of the assistance and facing eviction are unaware of the available resources, as the program has not been highly publicized. When the City of St. Pete’s Department for Housing and Development was contacted regarding rental assistance options, we reached a voicemail and still await a return call and answers.

“Welder work has been slow since Covid hit. It’s been tough to pay the bills. I’d pay the rent if I could,” said Tomas Defendantgalita, a St. Pete resident facing eviction. When informed of the Emergency Rental Assistance program, he stated this was the first he had heard of it.

Another St. Pete renter facing eviction, Andre White noted, “he’s heard nothing from the city about rental assistance programs”.

With a background in real estate and understanding what it means to have a “home”, Nowicki is dedicated to preventing homelessness and maintaining stable living situations for all St. Pete families. Upon noting the lack of awareness of the Emergency Rental Assistance program and dire need of those facing eviction, Mayor hopeful, Nowicki dedicates himself to spreading the word by personally visiting households against whom an eviction claim has been filed with the intention of helping people to understand their options. Furthermore, knowing that a huge barrier to disadvantaged tenants is the challenge of navigating the ins and the outs of the government systems and access to necessary technology, Nowicki has plans underway to host an ongoing Emergency Relief Assistance enrollment initiative in Downtown St. Pete.

For information about rental assistance and updates, please visit <http://www.vincentnowicki.com>.

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