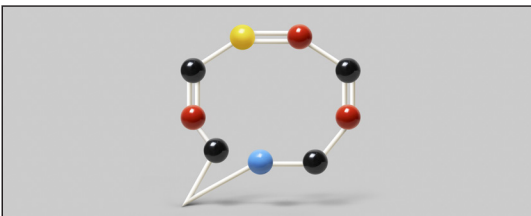


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‘THIS FEELS LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD’



PHOTOS BY JOSE CARLOS FAJARDO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Maria Verduzco stands in her living room among containers of belongings as she packs the contents of her home in Concord on Friday. Verduzco, who lives in the single-family home with her three children, is facing eviction at the end of the month.

Some Concord tenants live in fear of evictions

A group of residents is collecting signatures in an attempt to put the issue of increased and simplified rent protections across all units on November ballots

By Katie Lauer
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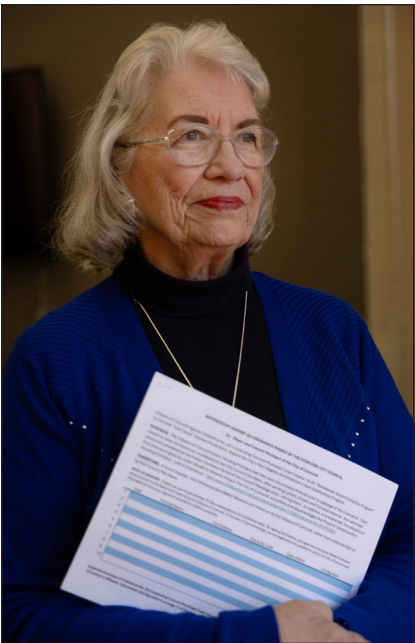
CONCORD » Maria Verduzco has two more weeks to move out of the three-bedroom house she and her three children have called home since 2021.

In late January, she received a 60-day notice that her landlord planned to terminate her tenancy by April 1 — without any listed reason. She said she had never missed any of her monthly \$1,700 rent payments and never had any disputes with the property owner.

While searching for a new residence that’s within her family’s budget is already stressful, Verduzco said it’s even more challenging while she is on disability and living on a fixed income while coping with depression as a survivor of domestic violence.

“This feels like the end of the world,” Verduzco said, fearing the possible fallout if she is not able to find another stable and affordable place, especially for her children. “Everywhere I’ve been looking, apartments are listed for \$2,000 or more. Even if the rent is low, requirements to pay the first month’s rent and a security deposit still make (moving) hard.”

Last month, the Concord City Council approved a tenant protections ordinance that increased “just cause” evic-



Jo Sciarroni has drafted a referendum petition to allow voters to decide the city’s long debated rental protections.

tion protections to most of the city’s tenants and established rent stabilization for roughly half its rental stock — intended to help ease the exact anxieties and financial hardships facing renters like Verduzco.

The rules dictating what landlords can and cannot do — as well as how renters can respond — are complex and not applied in the same way across all homes. (The full 30-page ordinance and broad summaries are posted on www.cityofconcord.org.)

For example, the new rules cap rent increases for multifamily rental units built before Feb. 1, 1995, at 3% or 60% of the Consumer Price Index, whichever is lower. Additionally, landlords would be required to pay relocation assistance for “no-fault” evictions of most rental units in Concord; for single-family homes and condos, that sum is equal to two months of the tenant’s current rent, plus a \$2,000 moving stipend.

For Verduzco, that “just cause” protection and financial assistance is too little, too late as the law was initially slated to be implemented three days after her scheduled eviction.

Moreover, the ordinance is currently in legal limbo for at least another few months — potentially leaving even more people facing similar housing predicaments in the lurch.

The effort to update the city’s rental policies has been underway since 2016, including seven marathon meetings and dozens of hours of public com-

PROTECTION » PAGE 6

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO

Citing ‘institutional racism,’ groups hope to reconnect neighborhoods split by barriers

By Ethan Varian
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In the span of a mile, two highways and a rail line slice through the heart of South San Francisco, forming barriers that residents must navigate daily on their way to work, school or to visit family.

Now, the “Industrial City’s” downtown area is the latest among Bay Area neighborhoods where officials are working to reconnect communities of color long divided by the construction of major roadways

and other transportation infrastructure.

Across the bay in Oakland, officials and advocates are even discussing a proposal to dismantle Interstate 980, a two-mile long connector route that splits West Oakland neighborhoods from downtown.

“It’s a physical manifestation of institutional racism,” said Randolph Belle, a local artist and real estate consultant helping with the plans. “It’s the other side of the tracks.”

Caltrans recently announced \$149 million for

RECONNECT » PAGE 6



KARL MONDON — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

South San Francisco’s historic downtown along Grand Avenue is separated from its modern business complexes to the east by an elevated Highway 101 and Caltrain tracks.

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Criticism hits nerve with Israeli leadership

Netanyahu angrily snaps back at Schumer, Biden and others who have disparaged his role in Gaza conflict

By Tia Godenberg and Ravi Nessman
The Associated Press

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL » Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu railed Sunday against growing criticism from top ally the United States against his leadership amid the devastating war with Hamas, describing calls for a new election as “wholly inappropriate.”

In recent days, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, the highest-ranking Jewish official in the country and a strong Israel supporter, called on Israel to hold a new election, saying Netanyahu had “lost his way.” President Joe Biden expressed support for Schumer’s “good speech,” and earlier accused Netanyahu of hurting Israel because of the huge civilian death toll in Gaza.

Netanyahu told Fox News that Israel never would have called for a new U.S. election after the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, and denounced Schumer’s comments as inappropriate.

“We’re not a banana republic,” he said. “The people of Israel will choose when they will have elections, and who they’ll elect, and it’s not something that will be foisted on us.”

When asked by CNN whether he would commit to a new election after the war ends, Netanyahu said: “I think that’s something for the Israeli public to decide.”

The U.S., which has provided key military and diplomatic support to Israel, also has expressed concerns about a planned Israeli assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where about 1.4 million displaced Palestinians are sheltering. The spokesman for the National Security Council, John Kirby, told Fox the U.S. still hasn’t seen an Israeli plan for Rafah.

The U.S. supports a new round of talks aimed at securing a cease-fire in exchange for the return of Israeli hostages taken in Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack.

The Israeli delegation to those talks was expected to leave for Qatar after Sunday evening meetings of the Security Cabinet and War Cabinet, which will give directions for negotiations.

Despite the talks, Netanyahu made it clear he would not back down from the fighting that has killed more than 31,000 Palestinians, accord-

NETANYAHU » PAGE 6

YOU DON’T SAY?

Gossip is beneficial if the information is deciphered correctly, Stanford study says

By Ryan Macasero
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What’s the scoop? Well, according to the latest research, gossiping may not be all that bad.

A recent study by Stanford University and University of Maryland researchers found that gossip may actually have positive effects.

According to Stanford University psychology professor Michele Gelfand, one of the authors of the new paper, gossip can be “really helpful in terms of disseminating information about people’s reputations.”

“Once you receive that information, it can help people calibrate who to connect with, who to work with,” said Gelfand, who also teaches at the business school. “If you hear that someone’s really selfish, you’re going to try to avoid them. If you hear someone’s really cooperative, you’re going to try to connect with them.”

There is a catch though. For gossip to be productive, it has to be accurate.

The study, which used computer simulations that mimic human behavior, found that it can help people foster bonds and promote cooperation within social circles. It can validate emo-

GOSSIP » PAGE 6

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