

RENT

# Price gap shrinking for California tenants

The gap between what California tenants pay and nationwide rents narrowed during the pandemic era. My trusty spreadsheet looked at ApartmentList's stats on what new tenants pay in order to gauge how much rents have risen in the pandemic era. It compared averages for California and the nation for July through September to similar summer months in 2019 using a rental measurement tracking all unit sizes.

California rents ran \$1,958 a month this summer, the second-highest in the nation behind Hawaii. That was up 14% since July through September 2019.

Meanwhile, the typical U.S. tenant only paid \$1,369, but that was up 21% in the same period.



Jonathan Lansner  
Columnist

Those moves translate to California tenants paying 43% more vs. the national norm — a premium that was 52% four years ago.

Still, that means it costs \$589 a month more — almost \$6,000 a year — to be a renter in the Golden State.

**Details**

Rents gyrated higher nationwide once coronavirus hit the housing market early in 2020. Some renters sought larger living spaces. Others, with remote work options, chose to move away from bigger cities. That onslaught of demand in turn boosted rents. But in 2023, with the pandemic a smaller health and economic issue, housing needs evolved again and rental demand has since

slipped in many markets.

Still, rents remain above pre-pandemic levels in much of the nation. The biggest gains in the pandemic era were found in states with noteworthy population inflows ...

New Mexico: \$1,296 a month average rents this summer (No. 24 among the states) are up 45% in four years.

Delaware: \$1,617 (No. 12) — up 39% in four years.

New Hampshire: \$1,679 (No. 9) — up 36% in four years.

Florida: \$1,684 (No. 8) — up 34% in four years.

Mississippi: \$1,102 (No. 35) — up 33% in four years.

**Caveat**

Let's note that California renters by no means have had a universal experience since the coronavirus upended the economy.

For example, 38 California cities out of 70 tracked by ApartmentList had four-year rent gains that exceeded the nation's 21% increase. The three largest jumps since 2019 were found in Carlsbad at \$3,187 a month up 44%. Escondido jumped to \$2,220, up 41%, and Chino rose to \$2,403, up 41%. All benefitted from exits out of big Southern California cities.

Meanwhile, this rent metric shows price drops in eight California cities since 2019. The three largest declines were in the Bay Area — Oakland (\$1,571, off 19%), San Francisco (\$2,203, off 16%) and Mountain View (\$2,504, off 8%).

**Bottom line**

The state's slowly slipping population and its modest home building efforts may have helped

to cool rent inflation. Also, various government-imposed rent caps have limited what landlords can charge. Certain other pricing tethers were added during the pandemic.

Still, California's a pricey place to rent. Just peek at the 324 big U.S. counties tracked by ApartmentList.

California had seven of the 10 costliest counties this summer: Orange was No. 2 at \$2,638, followed by Santa Clara, at No. 3 at \$2,565; San Mateo, No. 5 at \$2,469; Napa, No. 6 at \$2,463; Ventura, No. 7 at \$2,446; San Diego, No. 8 at \$2,419; and Santa Barbara, No. 9 at \$2,383.

*Jonathan Lansner is the business columnist for the Southern California News Group. He can be reached at [jlansner@scng.com](mailto:jlansner@scng.com)*

# STATUS UPDATE



**Samantha Gowen has the latest on movers and shakers in Orange County**

Send items about business expansion, milestones and promotions to [sgowen@scng.com](mailto:sgowen@scng.com)

## Din Tai Fung coming to mall's 'streetscape'

The owner of Brea Mall in September launched its multimillion-dollar redevelopment plan, which is adding a new "streetscape" scene and several new tenants, including the popular dumpling house Din Tai Fung.

Property owner Simon got approval from the city last December and recently announced it has signed deals to bring in the high-end fitness gym operator Life Time, Zara, Pacific Catch, Dick's Sporting Goods, Philz Coffee and The Melt.

Din Tai Fung first opened in Orange County in 2014, drawing big lines at South Coast Plaza as diners waited to enjoy Shanghai-style soup dumplings. The family-owned restaurant chain has locations in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore and Korea. It's been expanding across Southern California ever since.

By demolishing the former Sears store and its auto store and building on 7 acres of parking lot space, Simon will have room to add an outdoor retail setting featuring a plaza, greenery and an array of shops entered from the street.

The mall operator, which did not offer a timeline for the construction, also is adding a seven-story apartment complex with several hundred units.

You can check out more of Simon's plans for the mall at [simon.com/brea-mallmakeover](https://simon.com/brea-mallmakeover)

## Paséa Hotel launches restaurant renovations

Tanner's Restaurant at Paséa Hotel & Spa in Huntington Beach is closing Oct. 29 as the hotel embarks on a \$5 million renovation of its dining venues.

A new food and beverage program is planned for spring 2024.

The hotel, which debuted at the beach in 2016, hired Vincent Savignano as its director of food and beverage to lead the renovations. He previously was in charge of food and beverage operations at Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa after a three-year stint as that hotel's executive chef.

Amid the renovations, Paséa will open a pop-up concept called The Study Kitchen + Bar. It will have an indoor dining room, bar and ocean-view veranda and dining options in the hotel's private cabanas.

## Goodwill replacing shuttered Big Lots

Orange residents may have noticed there is new life coming to a vacant Big Lots in the same shopping center as Home Depot.



PHOTO BY MERRILL SHINDLER

The Din Tai Fung dumpling house is part of a new "streetscape" at Brea Mall. The family-owned restaurant chain has locations in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea.



PHOTO BY MERRILL SHINDLER

Din Tai Fung, a popular dumpling restaurant that first opened in Orange County in 2014, is coming to Brea Mall.



NICK AGRO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tanner's Restaurant at Paséa Hotel & Spa in Huntington Beach is closing Oct. 29 as the hotel embarks on a \$5 million renovation.



SAMANTHA GOWEN — STAFF

A Goodwill store is replacing the Big Lots in Orange on N. Tustin Street. The nonprofit said it expects it to open in December.

A temporary Goodwill poster hangs from the building at 1821 N Tustin St., where workers were seen moving in and out of the retail space.

Goodwill confirmed the store will open by December.



Andrade

ing, food assistance, utilities, transportation and other resources offered by local nonprofits and government agencies.

## Appointments

Orange County resident Stephen Hicklin has been appointed as a judge in the Orange County Superior Court. Hicklin, who has been a sole practitioner since 2018 and of counsel at Bonial & Associates PC since 2020, fills the vacancy created by James L. Crandall, who retired. Hicklin is a Democrat.

Aliso Viejo resident Christina Petteruto has been appointed to the advisory council on Improving Interactions between People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Law Enforcement. Petteruto has been general counsel at the Regional Center of Orange County since 2017. This position does not require Senate confirmation and there is no compensation. Petteruto is a Republican.

## Good works

As part of Mental Illness Awareness Week, community volunteers and staff at the Be Well campus in Orange painted Green Bench O.C.'s newest bench installation. The movement aims to improve community understanding and acceptance of mental health and wellness. By painting benches lime green, community organizations reduce stigma and create safe spaces for mental health conversations.

Higher Ground Youth & Family Services in Anaheim raised \$565,000 at their annual fundraising gala on Sept. 30 at its Decade of Impact Gala.

The event raised money to help underserved youth and families. For more information or to donate, visit [Highergroundoc.org](https://Highergroundoc.org).

San Clemente's Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens raised over \$240,000 at the Toast to the Casa gala. The money will go toward Casa Romantica's rebuilding efforts.

Friendly Center raised \$145,000 at its One Heart Gala held Sept. 30 at The Ranch Events Center in Anaheim.

The money will go toward providing stability, opportunity and hope to Orange County children and families in crisis.

*Status Update is compiled from press releases by contributing writer Karen Levin and edited by Business Editor Samantha Gowen. Submit items and high-resolution photos to [sgowen@scng.com](mailto:sgowen@scng.com). Allow at least one week for publication. Items are edited for length and clarity.*