



San Francisco Real Estate Attorneys

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-Ms. X. N. Tan

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**STEVEN ADAIR MACDONALD**

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Steven Adair MacDonald literally “wrote the book” on landlord-tenant law in San Francisco. The founder of Steven Adair MacDonald & Associates is the author of *Landlord-Tenant Solutions in California* and *The San Francisco Rent Board User’s Guide*, widely recognized books on the subject of landlord-tenant law in the Bay Area. Our team of lawyers brings many decades of experience in real estate law to the negotiation table or the courtroom. We pride ourselves in finding creative solutions for complicated scenarios. We use a variety of conflict resolution strategies to help our clients achieve the best possible outcome for the least cost, including mediation, negotiation, and litigation.

## THE WORKINGS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO RENT BOARD

In 1979 San Francisco passed a law that created the Rent Board as well as controls on rents and evictions. It only covers residential buildings in existence at that time. Newer buildings are exempt. The Board is now a substantial agency with significant funding and many functions. It does not decide evictions. Only courts can do that. Also, a subsequent state law exempted single-family homes and condominiums rented after 1995 from the rent control aspect of this ordinance.

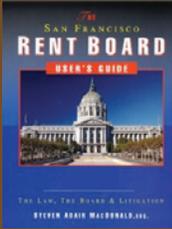
Landlords and tenants can file petitions and have hearings and mediation for a variety of disputes. A decision by an administrative law judge can be appealed to the commissioners who comprise the actual Board. Further appeals need to go to the Superior Court.

Typical tenant petitions address improper rent increases or claims of decreased housing services (to justify a rent reduction). Common landlord petitions are for special rent increases justified by excessive utility costs or for capital improvements made to the building. There are also hearings to

obtain a market rent increase if the owner can prove that the tenant no longer occupies the unit as his primary residence. Another rare one is where the original rent had been abnormally low due to special circumstances such as a unique supportive relationship between the landlord and the tenant at the time of the original renting.

The Rent Board is a fountain of information about itself. Its website, [www.sfrb.org](http://www.sfrb.org), describes all of these procedures and more, and provides the petition forms needed. Depending on the complexity of the matter a landlord or tenant may require expert legal counsel at the hearing, especially for a market rent increase petition where so much is at stake. Lesser disputes are often handled by the parties without an attorney.

The local law which defines the Rent Board’s duties and guidelines is amended frequently. Regulations passed by the Rent Board commissioners to implement it are also changed quite often. Their website is the best place to stay updated.



Steven Adair MacDonald  
is the author of  
*Landlord-Tenant Solutions in  
California* and *The San Francisco  
Rent Board User's Guide*.



We are pleased to announce  
that Steven MacDonald has  
been awarded the highest  
rating possible for an attorney,  
an AV Peer Review Rating by  
Martindale-Hubbell!

“Steven MacDonald’s *San Francisco Rent Board User’s Guide* is a positive and very useful contribution to the public’s understanding of the law.”

—Mr. Joe Grubb, Executive Director  
*San Francisco Residential Rent  
Stabilization and Arbitration Board*

“We got our money’s worth!  
Mr. MacDonald is a very reasonable professional.”

—Mr. H. P. Chen

“We were so worried! But we entrusted our legal  
problem to Mr. MacDonald and he did a super job.”

—Ms. Mila Leiderman

“Mr. MacDonald’s *Landlord-Tenant Solutions in California*  
is equally useful to lawyers and laymen.”

—Hon. William A. Newsom  
*Justice, California Court of Appeals [Ret.]*

(Testimonials do not constitute a guarantee or prediction of the outcome of your legal matter.)

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