

Tiffany LeColst

HOUSING CODE INSPECTORS PLAY A  
VITAL ROLE



I am Tiffany LeColst and I live at 5027 Emmet St. I, too, am a member of OTOC Housing Action Team. I also work for a non-profit organization and currently do housing inspections for homeless individuals and/or families who are transitioning into housing.

I do weekly proactive inspections to make sure unit is up to code before tenant moves in. With doing inspections weekly on rental properties all throughout the Omaha metro area, as you can imagine, I see the good and the bad that goes along with it. A few code violations I personally have run into is as follows: converting bedrooms in basement without egress windows, missing smoke alarms, and no proper ventilation, just to name a few. When landlords know and understand the standards set forth that are to be met, the code violations are fixed and an improvement has then been made to the property.

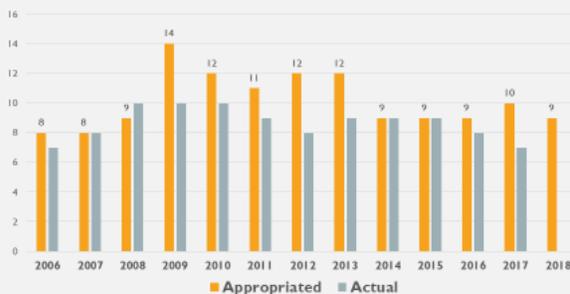
**PROBLEM: THERE ARE MORE RENTAL PROPERTIES IN OMAHA AND FEWER HOUSING CODE INSPECTORS**

- Since 2008 there are 9,000 more rental units in Omaha—a 14% INCREASE.
- Since 2008 the number of housing code inspectors has DECREASE from 10 actual inspectors to 7 in 2017—a 30% decrease.

The amount of rental properties in Omaha are continuing to increase and with that there is a great need for more Housing Code Inspectors. Since 2008, there are 9,000 more rental units in Omaha – that is a 14% increase. The number of Housing Code Inspectors has decreased from 10 to 7 in 2017 – at a 30% decrease.

**SO WHAT CAN BE DONE?  
INCREASE NUMBER OF HOUSING CODE INSPECTORS**

**Appropriated Vs. Actual Housing Code Inspectors**



- City Planning has a history of budgeting for housing code inspectors who never get hired
- In only two years since 2009 did the City actually hire the number of inspectors in the annual city budget.

**OTOC Position:** Hire and train all the Housing Code Inspectors needed to assure proper enforcement of housing codes

In doing this research, we see a pattern that the city has planned a budget for a number of Housing Code Inspectors to be hired. However, not all positions are being filled.

**With all due respect, OTOC asks that all positions be filled** so the City can establish a minimum health and safety standard necessary to protect and promote the welfare of tenants and the general public.

**Dennis Walsh**

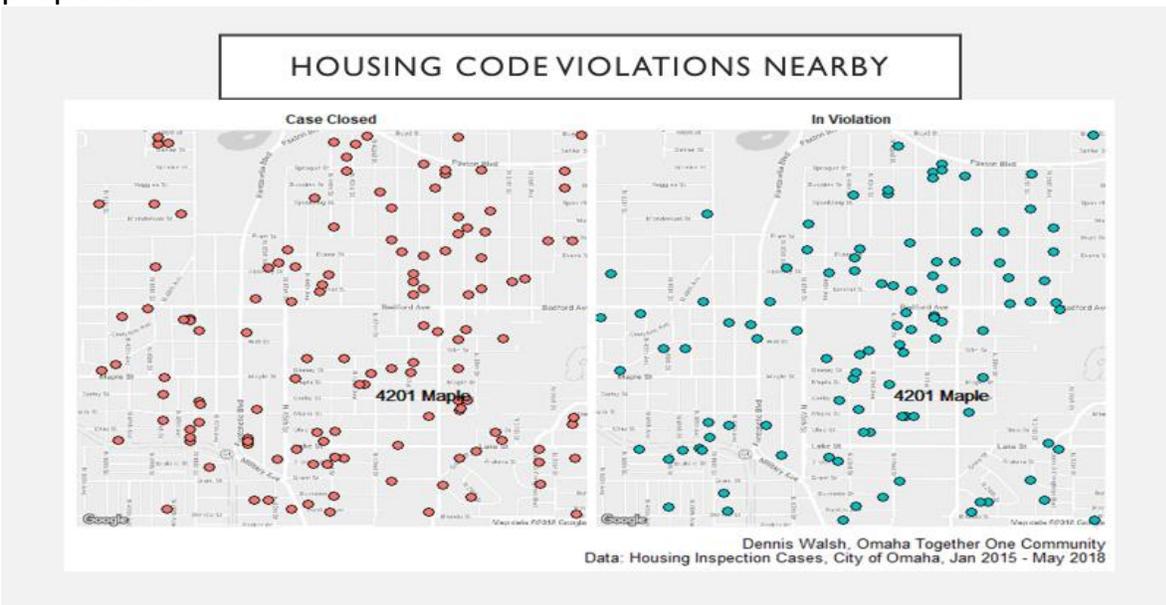
**SUMMARY OF 42<sup>ND</sup> AND MAPLE**

- 1 well maintained owner occupied house.
- 1 abandoned house that was a rental.
- 3 overgrown lots after demolitions
- 6 rental houses owned by out of state or West Omaha owners



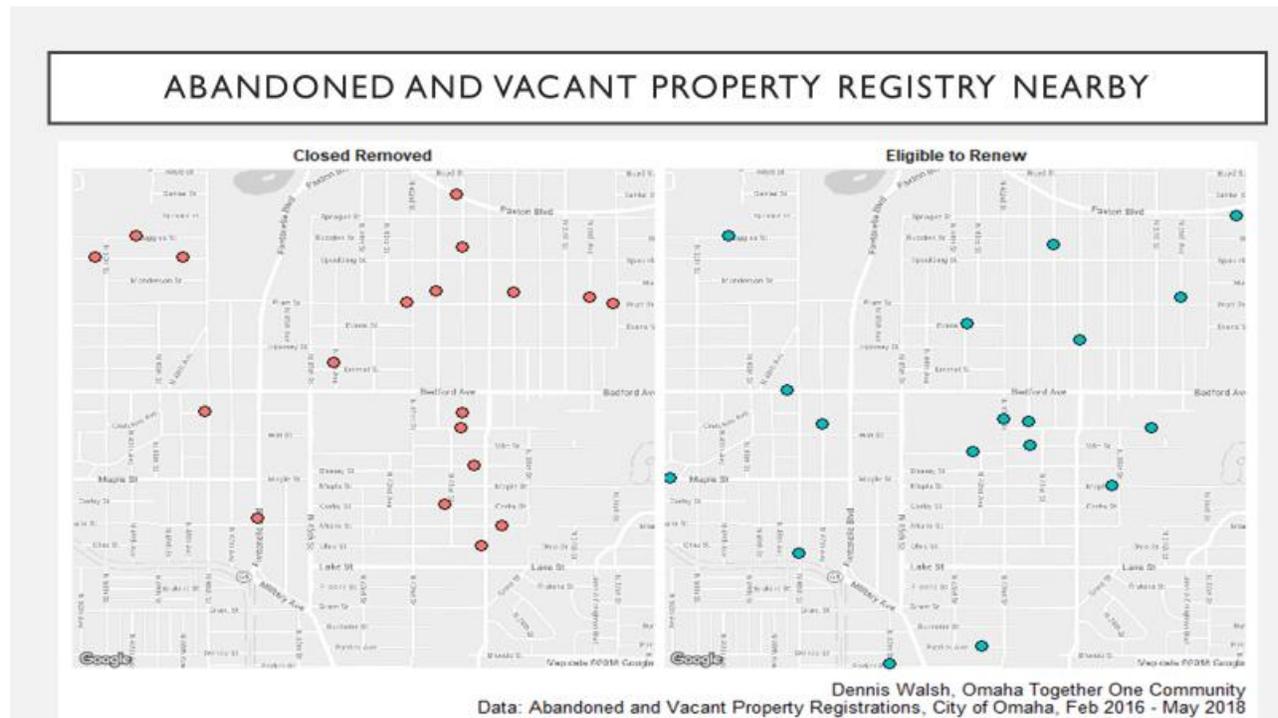
Dennis Walsh, W-A-L-S-H. 2120 Spencer St. Member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

To conclude OTOC’s presentations, the 42<sup>nd</sup> and Maple block has one owner-occupied property, one vacant rental, three overgrown lots, and six rental properties.



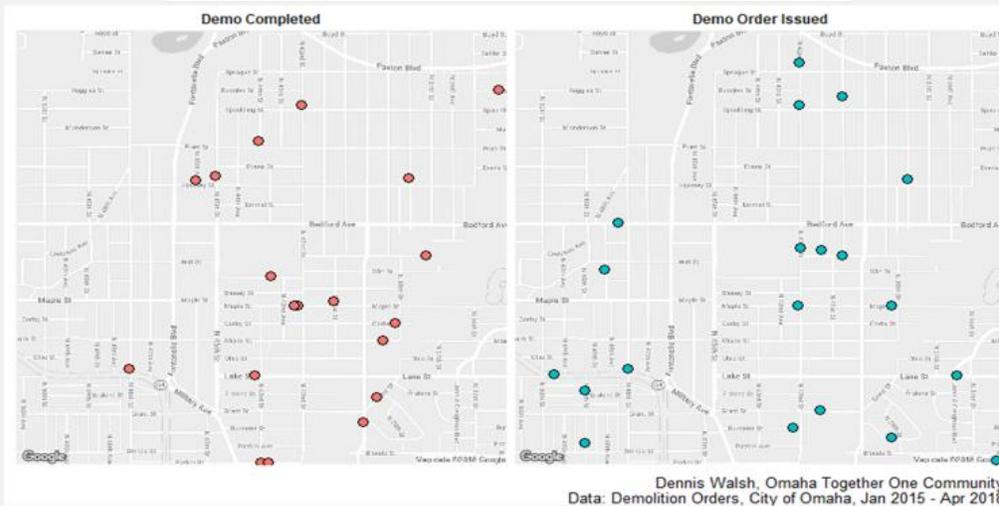
This block is not unique. Here are housing code violations within about one mile of that block, from January 2015 to May 2018. Red is for cases solved, turquoise for open cases. A lot of complaints are unsolved. If all these complaints had been called in by council members, 3 of your 7 complaints would remain open.

We have a big time lag problem. For 2015 complaints, 2 of 7 remain open three years later. For 2016 complaints, 3 of 7 remain open. For 2017 complaints, over 4 of 7 violations remain open. Citywide 23% of 2015 complaints remained open as of May. We find this slow response unacceptable – as really, anyone would. Our complaint-based code enforcement system is broken.



The result of unsolved problems is often abandonment. Here are the last two years of neighborhood activity on the abandoned and vacant property registry. Fines of \$500 per quarter create an incentive for progress. Red dots represent progress off the list. Turquoise dots remain on the list. In the last decade too many properties have been abandoned.

## CITY FUNDED DEMOLITIONS NEARBY



The result is demolition. The last three years of neighborhood demolitions are in red. Turquoise shows the list of future demolitions. Some may call this a map of failures, but that is not really true. Our complaint-based enforcement system is designed to create situations where it is too late to truly solve the problem. The system is designed to end in demolition. **This is the Demolition Pipeline.**

## STOP THE DEMOLITION PIPELINE

- Open Code Violations → Vacant and Abandoned → Demolition by City
- 2/3ds of the Open Code Violations are in rental properties
- 75% of the properties East of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street are 70 years or older

### OTOC position:

- Work with OTOC and Housing experts in Omaha to investigate solutions to the growing problem of deteriorating, substandard Rental Housing.
- Investigate the benefits and challenges of adopting a pro-active Rental Property Registration and Inspection Ordinance.

**We call on the city to stop the demolition pipeline.** As 2/3 of code violations involve rental properties, we call on the city to work with OTOC, landlords, tenants, and housing experts to investigate solutions to the growing problem of deteriorating, substandard rental housing. Specifically, investigate adopting a proactive rental inspection ordinance. We have met with five different landlords. Landlords should be included in the city's investigation, including non-MOPOA landlords. Some landlords see the need to change the way we do things. We can't keep doing things the same way. La Vista went to a proactive system in 2010, followed by Council Bluffs and Carter Lake. It's not just 42<sup>nd</sup> and Maple that is being left behind. The city of Omaha is being left behind. You have acted on the back end. Now, please act on the front end. Thank you.