Eliminating Substandard Housing

A Guide to Possible Solutions

Omaha Together One Community
Institute for Public Leadership

Rental Registration Only

This solution requires rental property owners to obtain a license before being allowed to rent residential property.

Pros

1. City will know number & location of most properties
2. Property manager contact information
3. Easier to track rental housing stock

Cons

1. Does not promote property upkeep
2. "Complaint driven" system remains
3. Does not identify problem properties

Housing Ombudsman

This solution establishes an ombudsman who will act as a liaison for code enforcement and landlord-tenant disputes.

Pros

1. Tenants have a resource to turn to
2. Landlord is more accountable
3. Quality is upgraded in reported cases

Cons

1. May have other housing responsibilities
2. "Complaint driven" system remains
3. If owner refuses, must start code case

Inspection Pilot Program

This solution creates a targeted inspection program to test the effectiveness of the program at alleviating deteriorating neighborhoods.

Pros

1. Tests effectiveness before enacting
2. Low-cost to the city
3. Target area quality improvements

Cons

1. Small scope hurts long-term impact
2. Negligent property owners move
3. Challenge to determine the target area

Rental Registry and Inspection

This solution creates both a rental registration requirement and an inspection program for the entire municipality.

Pros

1. Identifies and enforces minimum housing standards for all
2. Registration fee pays for inspectors
3. Strong accountability for quality

Cons

1. Landlords or tenants pay the fee
2. City must hire, train & support staff
3. Organizing thousands of inspections/yr

Rental Registration Only

Louisville, Kentucky

The city of Louisville requires that landlords register with the city or incur a fee of $100 per day per housing unit. The registration itself is free to landlords with no inspection being required as a part of the registration. The main purpose behind this was:

"*Concerns were raised by code enforcement inspectors, citing the difficulty in finding the person who was responsible for problem properties*."

Housing Ombudsman

Lansing, Michigan

The city of Lansing has hired a "Housing Ombudsman" to work as a mediator between landlords and tenants. This is just one of many roles that are played by this actor, some of which are:

1. **Homelessness resolution**

2. **Liaison to code enforcement**

3. **Promoting fair and affordable housing**

4. **Providing housing resources to tenants**

Inspection Pilot Program

Kansas City, Missouri

Before enacting a full scale Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance, Kansas City implemented an inspection pilot program targeting neighborhoods with these characteristics:

1. **30 percent or more housing units in target area are rental units.**

2. **Declining housing inventory that exhibits substantial deterioration.**

3. **There is neighborhood resident interest in systematic housing inspections.**

Rental Registry and Inspection

Minneapolis, Minnesota

The full-fledged ordinance for Minneapolis has a license fee structures for landlords, which are determined by which of three quality "tiers" their property falls under.

St. Louis, Missouri

In St. Louis, this municipality requires that any change in residency tenancy triggers an inspection, with that inspection being valid for 12 months for rental properties.