



Department Source: Community Development - NS

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: December 3, 2018

Re: Report on City rental enforcement and problem properties

Executive Summary

Councilman Skala requested additional information on the City's enforcement of rental properties, in particular problem properties, at the October 1, 2018 Council meeting. This report is for informational purposes in response to that request, and includes a short summary of several elements in response to Council comments.

Discussion

Current Enforcement: The Rental Unit Conservation Law found in Chapter 22 of City Code has been in place since the late 1970's. As of September 30, there were 10,109 buildings and 28,136 units in compliance. Registered properties must pass an inspection and are issued a Certificate of Compliance (COC) for three years. At the expiration of the COC, if there have been no complaints or violations, the property may renew for an additional three years without a City inspection. The majority of City rental properties are being inspected once every six years.

Absentee Landlords: There was a concern raised about absentee landlords. A review of the rental data, with the help of the Information Technology Department, showed that 1,166 or 4% of units had no owner, operator or agent addressed in Missouri. That list includes 58 different complexes, single family homes or duplexes. In addition, 2,100 or about 7.5% had no owner, operator or agent with a Columbia address; many properties have contacts in mid-Missouri. Some communities require a local agent for rental properties; this may be a requirement that the City of Columbia should explore.

Housing Choice Voucher properties: Attached to this report is a memo from Phil Steinhaus, CEO of the Columbia Housing Authority, which details the Housing Choice Voucher Program and CHA's efforts to respond to criminal activity. CHA denies applications for those with criminal activity within the last five years.

Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program: The Columbia Police Department provides training to rental property owners and managers to enhance safety in their properties. Free training sessions are held throughout the year providing information on applicant screening, drug nuisance abatement, and landlord tenant law. There are seven apartment communities currently fully certified in the program.

Chronic Nuisance Property & Nuisance Party Ordinances are found in Chapter 16 of the City's Code of Ordinances and are enforced by the Police Department. Chronic nuisance properties are defined as residential properties on which or within 200 feet of which any



City of Columbia

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person associated with the property has engaged in three or more nuisance activities during any four-month period. The ordinance lists 16 categories of violations. After two nuisance activities, the owner is notified by the Chief of Police and a meeting is requested. After a third nuisance activity the property may be abated through closure for up to one year. Officer McClintic, who is assigned to Neighborhood Services, monitors 1,000-1,200 residential addresses where violations have occurred and sends three or four notices letters each month to owners of properties that have met the two nuisance activity threshold. This ordinance has been an effective tool for the City; abatements have not occurred as property owners resolve the problem voluntarily.

Tenant's Bill of Rights: Tenants may file a complaint with the Office of Neighborhood Services if they have a code issue in their home. In FY18, 143 complaints were received and most of those result in an inspection by a staff member. While the City of Columbia has not formally adopted a Tenant's Bill of Rights, City staff regularly share information with tenants on this topic. Students, in particular, are given information about City ordinances related to living off campus. The Missouri Attorney General has developed a document on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants and this is shared as a resource. Staff also regularly refer tenants to Mid Missouri Legal Services if they are seeking civil legal help.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: N/A
Long-Term Impact: N/A

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

[Strategic Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Social Equity, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

[Comprehensive Plan Impacts:](#)

Primary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities, Secondary Impact: Not applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
n/a	n/a

Suggested Council Action

Information; no action is required.