



# Great Places

All Minneapolis residents, visitors and employees have a safe and healthy environment

## What strategies are working?

### OUR ORDINANCES AND INSPECTIONS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

- Inspectors are checking furnaces in rental properties, and, as a result, we're seeing fewer "no heat" emergencies.
- Thanks to the 311 app, the Fire Department is getting information about multi-family building concerns and is able to inspect properties in a more timely fashion.
- The Fire Department offers a safety audit of owner-occupied homes for interested residents.
- City inspectors are getting into more interior rental units in a timely manner.
- The City inspects for lead in homes at a more stringent rate than the State of Minnesota requires so we are helping more kids avoid lead exposure. Additionally, the City has lobbied the State to change the definition of lead poisoning from 10 micrograms of lead per milliliter of blood to 5 micrograms. Next year, lead inspections won't be voluntary and, as a result, we will be able to help more kids.
- The energy audit ordinance has helped tenants by requiring landlords to take care of energy leaks. Previously, many landlords didn't take care of energy leaks in rental properties because their tenants pay for heat.
- City ordinance is based on the international housing code, which has many health and environmental policies.

### WE ARE MAKING THE MOST OF EXISTING RESOURCES.

- The HUD grant for healthy homes has enabled us to use a different lens to evaluate home hazards that cause health problems.
- A grant aimed at helping families affected by asthma has enabled participants to install HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters, replace bedding and make other changes to ease asthma symptoms. Kids were tracked over the course of a year, and school absences for this group dropped by 70 per cent.
- By combining funds from the City and philanthropic groups, Project for Pride in Living has helped low income homeowners remediate home health hazards such as mold, lead and radon.

### WE ARE COLLABORATING TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS.

- The Minneapolis One Touch program is a great model of leveraging resources and working as a team. Anyone – nurse, firefighter, inspector, etc. — who touches a home and finds a problem makes sure that the client knows about resources to fix the problem.
- More neighborhood organizations are interested in working to make rental housing safe and healthy.

## What strategies are not working?

### THE NUMBER OF RENTAL PROPERTIES IS RISING FASTER THAN OUR CAPACITY TO KEEP UP.

- The number of rental properties is rising at the same time that our inspections staff has decreased. Out of more than 23,000 rental properties, City inspectors can get into only 3,500 properties each year.
- The Fire Department can get into only about 20 percent of properties each year. The construction boom is adding even more inspections to our workload.
- Ownership changes and conversions from homeownership to rentals are adding to the inspections workload.

### THE NUMBER OF PROBLEM BUILDINGS IS GROWING.

- Between 70 and 80 percent of kids with lead poisoning live in Tier 2 and Tier 3 housing (housing with a history of violations.) Our goal is to get into Tier 3 housing once a year, but we can't get to all of them. The City needs to own up to the fact that people are made sick by some of the housing that is licensed by the City.
- Some investors have as many as 350 properties, and owners depend on the fact that we can't monitor them all.

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The number of Tier 3 problem properties is increasing. We need to monitor these properties, but we also have to get monitor Tier 1 buildings. After all, Tier 1 owners are paying fees, as well.

- Rental property owners know the City won't condemn a property because we don't want to make tenants homeless. So property owners let things go instead of fixing the problem.

## **WE DON'T HAVE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS.**

- Our rental inspection fee is too low: it doesn't cover the City's costs.
- When landlords stop renting single family homes, the homes are costly to fix up. Getting the home in shape can take \$30,000 to \$40,000 — that's more money than a market transaction can cover. It's not economically feasible to buy and fix up the worst of the worst.
- Nonprofits can't charge enough rent to cover fix-up costs.
- Money for home fix-up is going away. Low income owners don't have the resources to maintain healthy homes and fix health hazards.
- The navigator program (a program to assist certain homeowners with maintaining their properties) is working, but there still isn't enough money to help property owners who don't have the skills to negotiate the system.
- The population is aging, so we expect to see more seniors and people with mobility issues having difficulty maintaining their homes.
- We expect more hoarders, but the hoarding task force is coming to an end. Many of these people just need a support system and help getting rid of items and maintaining their homes.
- The public doesn't see any coordination of home health and safety efforts.
- Not all neighborhood organizations are involved with housing issues.

## **ZONING PRESENTS ROADBLOCKS FOR ALTERNATIVE HOUSING SOLUTIONS.**

- People don't want board and lodging establishments in their neighborhoods.
- Homeowners can't build accessory dwellings for their aging parents.

## Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

### **DO MORE TO ENSURE OWNERS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR PROPERTIES.**

- Create an incentive to keep properties maintained. Change the fee schedule so Tier 1 fees are reduced and Tier 3 fees are much higher.
- Strengthen Minneapolis' Truth in Housing ordinance by making it similar to St. Louis Park's ordinance, which requires owners to fix major problems, not just disclose them. Or, incorporate FHA loan requirements into Minneapolis' ordinance.

### **FIND MORE RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.**

- Hire more housing inspectors so the City can meet the State's home inspections mandate.
- Connect home health and safety requirements to energy efficiency requirements. Get money from utilities and compel rental owners to use that money to make improvements.
- When we find a problem, make sure the owner is made aware of resources to fix that problem.
- Find resources to ensure we don't make renters homeless when we must revoke a license and evacuate tenants because of carbon monoxide or no heat.
- Find legal resources for tenants.
- With the demise of Community Action, the City should offer weatherization services.

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## TAKE A BROADER APPROACH.

- Stop using kids as lead detectors, and commit to getting rid of lead paint. We know which neighborhoods have housing with lead paint, and we should go block by block to make those homes safe.
- Encourage Neighborhood and Community Relations to work on housing issues.
- Coordinate and brand services related to green and healthy housing. There should be a common expectation that housing shouldn't make you sick. Create a common tool that can be used in the field to refer and coordinate home services.

## REMOVE REGULATORY BARRIERS.

- Revise zoning so Minneapolis can allow additional supportive housing, congregative housing and housing co-ops. Then incorporate regulations to ensure the quality and safety of that housing.
- Change zoning so homeowners can add an accessory dwelling for aging parents or family members who need care.

This conversation had representatives from Minneapolis City Council, Fire Department, City Coordinator's Office, Minneapolis Health Department, Regulatory Services, Mayor's Office, J. Miller & Associates, Inc. and Project for Pride in Living (PPL).