

Small Multifamily Property Owner's Fear of Blanket Rental Registration

Late Backup

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I am an active member of the Austin Apartment Association, but these comments are solely my own. At the AAA, I represent IROC members (owners of smaller rental properties) on the Legislative Committee, and since my wife and I are owners of smaller rental property ourselves, we are sensitive to issues which may affect us and the other IROC members which I represent. Specifically, we own an eightplex and several duplexes in south-central Austin in a mixed neighborhood which contains upscale homes and duplexes, as well as many larger apartments, and a fair amount of subsidized housing. In addition to being small, our rental property is also 40 years old. And in fact, the median age of Austin rental property is about 30 years.

I am very concerned about the prospect for a blanket Rental Registration program, which would subject ALL rental property owners to an onerous regime of intrusive and expensive inspections and disclosures. The owners of smaller and older properties would be the most burdened of all, partly because we lack onsite staff, and partly because older properties are much more vulnerable to Code Enforcement abuse (nitpicky citations for minor degradations or technical code shortcomings, which do not really affect safety). Most of the owners of older rental properties are operating their property well and in good faith, and are trying to provide an AFFORDABLE housing option to individuals whose financial means are limited. In fact, we are a huge source of affordable housing in this city, and are by far the largest source of such housing. If we are subjected to an onerous program of blanket rental registration, it cannot help but cause significant rental increases which will hurt the very people that rental registration is supposed to help! It will be extremely counterproductive.

Also, a blanket rental registration program which only targets a 20% geographic subset of the city, as proposed in Item 11, will be equally counterproductive within those large areas, which will be stigmatized.

What is needed instead is a targeted program of code compliance, with protections built in to shield owners who are operating their properties well and in good faith.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.