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**Improving Rental Housing In Regina**

**An Initiative of the  
North Central Community Association**

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**January, 2007**

## **1.0 | Project Overview**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to aid in developing consensus on solutions to improving rental housing in Regina, and ultimately the City of Regina. A number of community association boards have approved an initiative, funded by North Central Community Association (NCCA), to address the issues of substandard rental housing. An external facilitator will be used to talk to the multiple stakeholders.

### **1.2 Stakeholders**

Essential Stakeholders:

- City of Regina – Council, Community Services Department
- Community Association Boards
- Residents, particularly renters
- Landlords
- Other city community associations

Important Stakeholders:

- Social services funders – DCRE, etc.
- Partners – Police, Fire, Health Authority, etc.
- Province – Justice Department
- Community groups – e.g., First Nations, Métis, etc.

### **1.3 Background**

At a special meeting of the NCCA the Board of Directors agreed on a set of principles that recognized that:

1. A significant amount of rental housing in Regina is below acceptable standards.
2. Renters have a responsibility to maintain the standard of housing that is provided to them.
3. An acceptable standard of housing is essential to a respectful, healthy and safe community.
4. Working together, action is needed now to address the barriers to improving substandard rental housing.

These four principles represent the foundation of future discussions in resolving rental-housing issues in Regina.

#### **1.4 What**

- Housing stock in older areas can quickly deteriorate into unsafe, substandard conditions.
- To ensure that rental housing in the City of Regina meets a minimum safety standard through a carefully chosen strategy. Such strategies are:
  1. Rental Unit Licensing
  2. Landlord Licensing
  3. Rental Registries and Public Disclosure
  4. Complaint Systems and Rent Withholding
  5. Landlord Training Programs and Certifications
  6. Public Disclosure of Code Offenders

#### **1.5 Why**

- Studies have shown that there is a substantive link between crime and inadequate housing.
- A vital and attractive inner city is efficient to service with roads, utilities, police and fire services, and makes better use of limited resources from the property tax base available to the municipality.
- Cost of inaction can be measured in declining property values, and fire, police, property inspection and maintenance. This occurs at the same time that roads, utilities and other infrastructure must be maintained. As a result municipal finances are squeezed resulting in either higher tax rates generally, declining funds for services in other areas of the city, or a combination of these two.
- By tearing down substandard housing, employment opportunities are created for the many communities in the city.

#### **1.6 Goals**

- To provide safe and affordable rental housing in the City of Regina.
- To make certain that unscrupulous landlords who will not meet minimum standards are not allowed to rent out residential property.
- To find a solution that will not only benefit tenants and landlords, but for all citizens of Regina by raising housing and living standards.
- To improve labour force attachments, crime prevention, urban revitalization, academic achievement, and general health.

## **2.0 | Strategies**

### **2.1 Research Report On Rental Housing Regulations**

The report discusses statistics and strategies involving numerous cities. The idea was to provide information regarding approaches other cities have taken to address their rental housing issues, compare the results, and base a strategy around a model that would best fit the city of Regina. Though there are a number of strategies discussed in the report, the studies examined two distinct approaches:

#### **1. Rental Unit Licensing (RUL)**

- a. Focuses on the conditions of the individual properties being offered for rent.
- b. RUL program would differ from the complaint driven system currently in force in Regina because, among other things, such a program would mandate periodic inspections of rental units rather than inspections being conducted in response to complaints at specific properties.

#### **2. Landlord Licensing**

- a. Focuses upon the conduct of landlords rather than the condition of rental properties alone.
- b. The licensing of individual landlords rather than their properties per se.
- c. Landlords are licensed based on their record and management standards rather than on the condition of individual properties alone.

### **2.2 Other Strategies Continued**

#### **1. Complaint Systems and Rent Withholding**

- a. Tenant can register a complaint with civic authorities that his /her landlord has not resolved a legitimate complaint about the rental property.
- b. The civic authorities then contact the landlord and try to have the situation remedied.
- c. If the problem persists, an inspection will be ordered and a work order may be issued.
- d. If the work order is not complied with within the specified time, the landlord will be charged for each re-inspection that may be necessary at an escalating rate.

## 2. Landlord training Programs and Certifications

- a. Landlord training programs train landlords to manage their property properly, deal with tenants effectively, and minimize illegal activity on the rental property.
- b. Such programs purportedly create better landlords and neighbourhoods by educating landlords about tenant screening, increasing the need for unit maintenance, and the legal rights of both landlords and tenants.
- c. Such programs provide tips to landlords on how to more easily comply with code requirements.
- d. Certification that the landlord has successfully undergone the training program gives a “stamp of approval” to the landlord.

## 3. Public Disclosure of Code Offenders

- a. This option utilizes the power of public disclosure and publicity concerning the names of code offenders, their affiliations, and documents the nature of their offences.

## 4. Rental Registries and Public Disclosure

- a. A mandatory rental-recording program would charge landlords a one-time registration fee per each rental unit, and allow the City to maintain contact information for all rental units.
- b. Such a program would allow the City to keep track of individuals or businesses that rent out properties, and also provide a mechanism for the City to contact landlords in response to code violations.

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## 3.0| Conclusion

The NCCA is committed to solving the problems of rental housing. It also recognizes that such problems go beyond the inner city, and must be addressed on a citywide scale. With an organized plan of action, and the support of others within the city, Regina will not only be able to achieve greater equality for renting tenants and landlords, but also a safer and more desirable home for it's people.