

**Long Term Rental Research
Stakeholder Group
Meeting 6
September 1st, 2015**

Ground Rules for Meetings

The ground rules for the workgroup meetings are simple, and designed to help the process forward in a considerate, productive manner:

1. Treat each other, the organizations represented in the stakeholder group, and the stakeholders themselves with respect and consideration at all times – put any personal differences aside.
2. Work as team players and share all relevant information. Express fundamental interests rather than fixed positions. Be honest, and tactful. Avoid surprises. Encourage candid, frank discussions.
3. Ask if you do not understand.
4. Openly express any disagreement or concern you have with all stakeholder members.
5. Offer mutually beneficial solutions. Actively strive to see the other's point of view.
6. Share information discussed in the meetings with only the organizations/constituents that you may represent, and relay to the stakeholder group the opinions of these constituents as appropriate.

Ground Rules for Meetings Cont.

7. Speak one at a time in meetings, as recognized by the facilitator.
8. Acknowledge that everyone will participate, and no one will dominate.
9. Agree that it is okay to disagree and disagree without being disagreeable.
10. Support and actively engage in the workgroup decision process.
11. Do your homework! Read and review materials provided; be familiar with discussion topics.
12. Stick to the topics on the meeting agenda; be concise and not repetitive.
13. Make every attempt to attend all meetings. In the event that a primary workgroup member is unable to attend, that member is responsible for notifying Office of Neighborhood Services about alternative arrangements.
14. Question and Answers will be held until the end of each presentation.

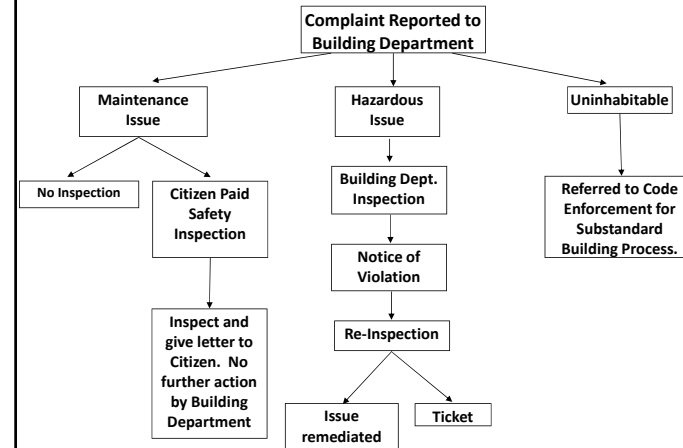
**Rental Properties
Inspector Supervisor Perspective**

Dan Skindzier, Building & Developer Services

OVERVIEW

- **Building Department is an enterprise fund**
- **Revenues come from permits/licenses**
- **Complete Safety Inspections - \$175 (SFR)**
 - Electrical, mechanical, Building, Plumbing
 - Inspectors focus on building code violations, not maintenance
- **Duplexes and multi unit buildings are more costly**
 - 3 to 6 units - \$250
 - 7 to 50 units - \$250 + \$25 each unit over 6
- **Imminent safety issues will be investigated as a matter of public safety without a fee**
 - Essentially look at one major issue.
 - Example: Exposed live wires, hazardous fire escape stairway
- **Complaint visits essentially redirect staff from paying permit holders**
 - Contractors/homeowners pay their permit fees for inspections
 - Unfunded site visits occur at the expense of paid permit holders.

Building Department Complaint Process



SAFETY INSPECTION PERMITS ELECTRICAL/MECHANICAL:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Unpermitted wiring/remodeling/additions | • Fire places/wood stoves/hearths |
| • Open Splices | • Furnace vents/ Hot water heater vents |
| • Proper grounding/bonding/polarity | • Combustion air |
| • Ground Fault protections/ Arc Fault protections | • CO2 detectors |
| • Service equipment meets code | • Exhaust vent terminations |
| • Random opening of outlets-switches | • Insulating of ducts in attic/garage |
| • Proper operation of lights | • Gas pipe for leaks |
| • Overuse of extension cords | • Gas ranges/gas stoves |
| • Smoke Detectors | |

Complete Safety Inspection

Includes electrical mechanical

PLUMBING

- Unpermitted work
- Proper size piping
- Valve work
- Proper vent pipes
- Hot/cold correctly installed
- Dishwashers have air gap protection
- Proper fittings/gluing of plastic pipe
- Open drain pipes

BUILDING

- Unpermitted work
- Handrails/guardrails
- Safe stairs
- Egress windows doors
- Accessory structures compliance
- Trip hazards: porch/walkway/decks
- Landings at exterior doors and decks
- Ramp slopes
- Combustible material storage

Summary of Rental Complaints -12 Month Period

Examples: 52 total complaints regarding rental units

14 Repair Complaints:

- Windows wont roll up
- Windows cracked or boarded up.
- Doors won't lock
- Heaters don't work
- Leaky Faucets
- Breaker trips when I operate vacuum
- Cold air in from windows/doors

10 Poor conditions or requests for condemnation complaints:

- Mice Infestation
- Mold
- Rain water leaks into house
- Family members getting sick from air
- "Just received eviction notice, inspect and condemn"

13 Conversions without permits, work in progress without permits

- Basements converted into bedrooms – improper egress
- Garages converted into living space
- Attic spaces converted into living spaces.
- Landlord has hired friend to do electrical repairs
- (Must be done by owner or full time employee or licensed contractor)

5 Electrical hazards

- Baseboard heaters have exposed wires
- Paying for elec. Usage in other units.
- Electricity bill too high, or higher than previous residence
- (1 renter had a "grow" operation)

4 Mold (stand alone complaint)

- Usually combined with other conditions

3 Wants a safety inspection

- Renters did ultimately pay for safety inspection
- Results given to renter only unless life safety issue discovered.

1 Wife moved to Spokane recently and is in a 700 Sq. Ft. ??

- This is a Violation of State law ???

MOLD

- A few years ago MOLD was a major regular complaint. Now more or less one of many issues
- We have no criteria for inspecting mold.
 - How much is too much?
 - No known penalty
- Many different causes:
 - May need opening of walls or ceilings
 - May be renter caused by improper ventilation, or cleaning habits
- Sometimes overstated, or used to request condemnation of a unit to get out of lease.
- Health Dept. doesn't inspect.
- Landlord Tenant issue

ANECDOTAL INFO

- **COURTLAND AVE:** Non Permitted conversion of duplex into 4-plex: Owner applied for fire damage repair permits and turned duplex into a 4-plex construction wise. Advertised it for sale as 4 rentable units.
- **MAPLE ST:** Owner submitted plans for upper addition with kitchen. Was denied in writing specifically that a kitchen area was not allowed, and noted that on permits and plans. Constructed with kitchen anyway. Ordered to remove at final inspection. Complied. Keep getting complaints about it being an apartment.
- **E. TRENT AVE:** Commercial building amidst existing apartments converted office space into additional apartment unit. Maybe others. No permits or inspections on record.
- **GONZAGA AREA:** Owners/speculators convert houses into student rental units and move out. Often just making space in basements and other rooms – no egress, no smoke detectors, triggers inadequate parking. Parents call after kids move in about concern. Kids have entered a lease. Will do courtesy inspection if granted access by tenant.

MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND REMODELS

- Owners of apartment units not exceeding 12 units nor 3 stories in height are eligible for certain permits.
- Many lack important electrical knowledge for wiring methods, GFCI protection.
- Loose connections and over loading of circuits are biggest cause of electrical fires.
- Stair steps can only have a maximum 3/8" variance in rise between steps.
- Missing handrails big problem.
- Maintenance skills are questionable, poor or unsafe repairs seen frequently

Following Slides Depicting Lack of Expertise

- Maintenance and repair items are not a Building Code Violation they are a landlord tenant issue
- Renters remove smoke detectors, or landlords do not install them
- Landlords add bedrooms/finish off basements/finish off garages
- Cosmetics are often nice but hidden utilities can be a problem
 - Open splices in walls
 - Improper insulation
 - Wrong size plumbing, or not tested for leaks
- Accessory Dwelling Units require owner to live on site.
 - Habitable units that contain provisions for cooking, sleeping, separate entrances, and other amenities like a house. Could be basement, addition, detached garage, carriage house, etc.
- Complaint visits essentially redirect staff from paying permit holders
 - Contractors/homeowners pay their permit fees for inspections
 - Unfunded site visits occur at the expense of paid permit holders.

Lack of Maintenance plus Unskilled Repairs



Hole in bottom of kitchen cabinet leading into basement (obvious water leak damage seen) and cold air filtering in from basement, Drain pipe slopes away from drain, taped up joint to stop water leak?

Lack of Maintenance and Repairs Between Tenants

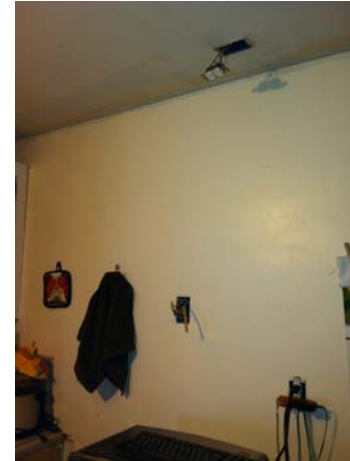


Same cabinet as previous slide. Water had to be leaking for a long time for this to occur. Floor has hole leading into basement allowing cold air up through floor into kitchen. Towels used to keep cold air out. (Basement had broken windows)

Hazardous Fireplace



Open Wiring and Overloaded Outlet in a Garage Conversion



Unpermitted Construction: Behind playhouse is an enclosed Mobile Home



Permit? For What??? It is just a playhouse!

Hazardous Wiring, Altered Structural Member



Yes property owners can do their own wiring....but they need permits and inspections! Even for small jobs! Also noticed floor joist is cut next to j-box.

Hazardous Wiring, No Permit or Inspection.



Garden hose used as electrical conduit to run new wires to light on other side of door! Masking tape used to secure fixture to junction box! Door jam not weather tight.

Hazardous Stair Case to upper apartment



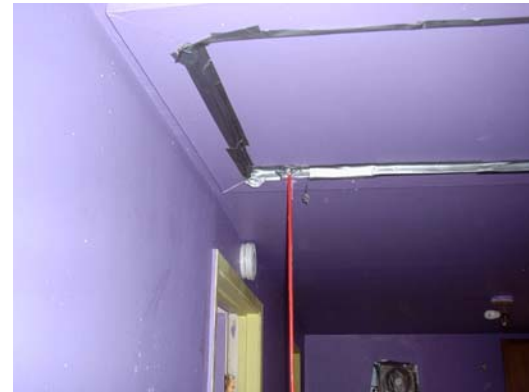
Steps lean to right, and no guard rail at top. Not seen in the photo is an open bridge-walk to apartment door on left.

Lack of maintenance skill, and electrical knowledge = Electrical Hazard



I guess a little bit of caulking does go a long way. Who needs an electrician! I'm sure that caulking is fireproof and there are no loose connections in that box.

Unpermitted conversion, unsafe electrical wiring:



Actual Garden Shed converted into an apartment. Tenant needed another outlet so an orange extension cord was taped up across the ceiling.... The heck with permits and inspections! Also smoke detector in unapproved area – dead space.

Unpermitted Electrical Work



I will just hide my terrible wiring job behind this washer and dryer!

Hazardous Electrical Wiring, Hazardous Mechanical Equipment



Missing Smoke detector, broken furnace pipe joint, broken light fixture hanging from spliced wires

Abandoned 4-plex apartment unit. This is what squatters do:



Abandoned units attract copper thieves and trashing of properties.

Unpermitted Conversion of Retail Space into an Apartment Rental



Commercial retail space converted into Apartment unit. Parking must occur on sidewalk. Water heater (not shown here) was sheet rocked into wall with no access, and many other code violations. No permits or change of use application.

Unpermitted Accessory Dwelling Unit. Falsified Permit Application



Owner applied for a 20' X 22' Sun Room in rear of property. Constructed a two story "house" with basement and upstairs bedroom/bathroom.

Conversion of Commercial Space into Apartment Without a Permit



Office converted into Apartment. Outlets above sink, no GFCI protection, no range hood, etc.

Unpermitted Water Heater Replacement. Hazardous Vent Connection



Same apartment, new water heater, vent pipe not secure. No inspections.

Unsafe exterior staircase. Obvious lack of maintenance



Unsafe exterior stair case. What else is in need of repairs???

Poor Maintenance Skills



Drop Ceiling Diffuser used as an exhaust termination of some kind. Framing not secure upper right. Poor maintenance skills. Not resistant to keeping bugs out.

Poor Maintenance Skills or Lazy Landlord Not Providing Tenant with Proper Ventilation Equipment



Exhaust vent of some kind. Window must stay open, both window and vent pipe allows critters and cold air in

Illegal Conversion of Units



Fire damaged 5 unit apartment building. New owner obtained permits for "Repairing Fire Damage". Completely gutted building, added units in basement, planned to make it into a 7 unit apartment, did not believe he needs sprinkler system. Falsified ownership declaration so he could get permits.

Challenges

- **Poor maintenance is not a criminal Offense, unable to obtain search warrant to investigate complaints if tenants or property owner denies access**
- **Building Inspection Department lacks sufficient staff to provide assistance for relocations if an order to vacate is given:**
 - **Dependent upon Neighborhood Services and Code Enforcement staff to initiate coordination with agencies such as:**
 - Elder protection Services
 - Children protective Agencies
 - Housing relocation assistance programs
- **Follow up actions consume more time than scheduled inspections.**
 - Permit fees are based upon inspection time only.
 - Letter writing often necessary
 - Owners may live out of area, or be an "LLC"
 - Registered letters need to be sent
 - Notices of violation need to be sent before civil infractions can be written
 - Re-inspections need to occur to verify conditions have been rectified.

Challenges Cont.

- **Many tenants call and complain because:**

- They want us to assist in breaking lease, or
- Facing an eviction notice (Every thing was ok until then.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Suggest a registration program for all rentals, single family or multifamily structures.**
- **Suggest a recurring inspection program of some type and frequency to be determined. (e.g.: every 3 years.)**
- **Designated individuals or staff to perform administrative duties, inspecting, and follow-up of noted inspection deficiencies.**
- **Penalties needed for failure to register, make corrections, repeat inspections that waste time for no –shows, or repairs not completed at an agreed upon date.**

Neighborhood Services and Code Enforcement City of Spokane

Heather Trautman: Director Of ONS and Code Enforcement



What Does Code Enforcement Do?

- Enforces land use violations on private property and right of way within Spokane City limits
- Seeks voluntary compliance to remove or resolve the condition
- Restores public safety and quality of life in our neighborhoods

Solid Waste & Refuse SMC 13.02.0126 & 13.02.0224

- General definition: mixed solid and semi-solid putrescible, discarded materials such as kitchen, food, animal and vegetable wastes; and
- “Refuse”, which is non-putrescible discarded materials, such as rubbish, ashes or other miscellaneous wastes.
- “Solid waste” includes recyclables from residential-use premises unless otherwise specifically indicated or apparent from the context.



Zoning Violations

Title 17C

- Outdoor Storage
- Yard Sales
- Recreational Camping
- Home Business Regulations
- Signs
- Residential Fencing
- Setback Area
- Accessory Structures & Uses



Fire Hazard from Vegetation and Debris

SMC 10.08.040

- 🔥 Owners and occupants of property within the City of Spokane must remove or destroy all grass, weeds, shrubs, bushes, trees and vegetation growing or which has grown and died and all debris which are a fire hazard or a menace to the public health, safety or welfare.



Junk Vehicles

RCW 46.55.230

“Junk Vehicle” means a vehicle certified under RCW 46.55.230 as meeting at least three of the four following criteria...

1. 3 years or older
2. Extensively damaged (such as broken glass, missing motor or transmission)
3. Apparently Inoperable
4. Having a fair market value equal to the scrap in it



Abandoned Vehicles

RCW 46.55.230 and SMC 16A

- Vehicles in the right of way
- Vehicles that run, but are not being driven (24 hour parking limitation)
- Registration expired over 45 days
- Junk Vehicles in the right of way
- Vehicles obstructing snow plows (Browne’s Addition) or construction zones

Public Right of Way

SMC 12.01 and 12.02

• What is the “Right-of-Way”?

○ The strip of land:

- ✦ a.) dedicated for public travel, including the main traveled portions of the streets and sidewalks as well as parking or planting strips, pedestrian buffer strips, and other associated areas, or over which is built, public streets, sidewalks, or alleys for public travel; or
- ✦ b.) used for or dedicated to utilities installation within the right-Of-way.

• What it isn’t?

- Right of way violations do not include items that are located on private property that are not obstructing public right of way.

Violation of the Public Right of Way

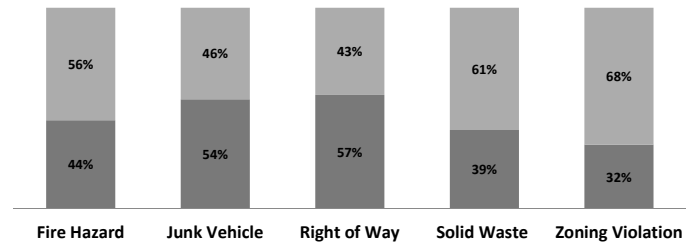
SMC 12.01 and 12.02

- Right of way violations include:
 - blocking a pedestrian path
 - Broken, heaved, or damaged sidewalks
 - collapsed retaining walls
 - obstruction of the right of way
 - piles of materials in the right of way
 - vegetation obstruction
- The purpose of Chapter 12.02 is to regulate and control the obstruction of the public right-of-way in the City so that those rights-of-way remain accessible and safe for their intended public use.

Code Complaints: 2 Years

Code Violations by Type

■ Owner Occupied ■ Renter Occupied



What is a Substandard Building?

SMC 17F.070.400

An substandard building is one which one of twelve criteria are present and to such an extent as to require the owner to repair and rehabilitate the building, or to warrant demolition.

Dilapidation

Exterior decay, water damage



Inadequate Weatherproofing

Siding, roofing and glazing



Structural Defects

Defects to the foundation, walls and roof framing



Inoperable or Inadequate Heating System



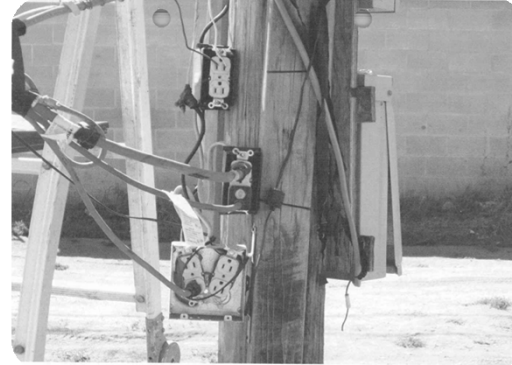
Defective/Inoperable Plumbing



Fire Damaged Structure



Hazardous Electrical Conditions



No Active Utility Service for One Year



Defects that Increase Risk of Fire, Accident or Calamity



Structure has been boarded for more than one year



Unsanitary Conditions

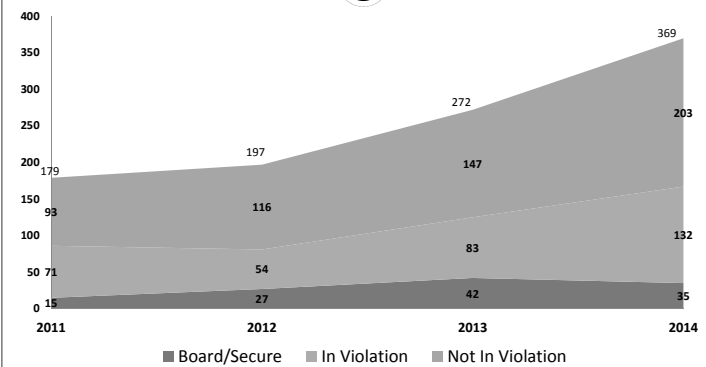
Accumulated waste creating health hazard.



Structure used in manufacturing of drugs and condemned



Building Official Cases



Example: Substandard Rental Property



Diamond: Ordered Do Not Occupy after Building Official Process. Demolished owner.



Example: Substandard Rental Property



Mallon: Active Rental. Rehabilitated after Building Official Process.



Example: Substandard Rental Property

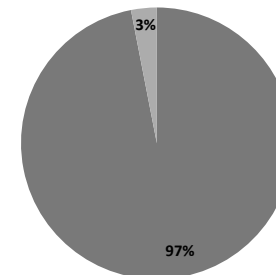


Regal: Ordered Do Not Occupy after Building Official Process. Demolished by New owner.



Current Cases

■ Active Substandard Cases ■ Active Rental at Time of Complaint



Issues



- Access to property to confirm reports of violations
- Finding responsible parties ie bank owned, foreclosure
- Access to funding; for owner rehabilitation
- Length of time for resolution on Substandard Building and solid waste
- Resolution for Substandard process is highly time intensive for staff