

Strengthen Healthy Homes Policies and Practices

LOCAL ACTION CHALLENGE FOR LEAD SAFE AND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

Create Resources and Build Commitment Across Stakeholders

Code enforcement is important to tenants, landlords and city agencies. Housing codes ensure safe buildings, working appliances, clean properties and quiet neighborhoods. Violations can mean dangerous lead exposure for tenants and decreased property values for landlords, among other negative outcomes. However, changes in inspection and enforcement policies are often divisive, and can pit tenants, landlords and city agencies against each other. City governments can overcome this divide by working closely with landlords and tenants, communicating clearly and providing resources to support each groups' needs.

What does this look like in action?

Just as many businesses are required to obtain a municipal permit in order to conduct business, landlords in some jurisdictions must register their rental properties. Depending on the state law, licensing can be made conditional on passing an initial inspection and periodic re-inspections. Even cities in states where an inspection-based licensing program is prohibited can still consider creating a rental registry to track violations.

Rental licensing has long existed in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. Its rental licensing program dates back to 1975, but in 2010 the city implemented a tiered, performance-based system in which units with fewer violations have less

frequent inspection requirements and units with more violations are inspected more regularly. The tiered system connects under-performing landlords to resources, while giving extra privileges to landlords who manage hazard-free properties.

Action Steps

- 1 Develop a communications strategy that publicizes property standards and standards of conduct for both landlords and tenants, with links to resources.
- 2 Build a registry of qualified property management companies.
- 3 Offer a "landlord academy" with resources and training on equipment maintenance, legal issues and financial management.
- 4 Set up a housing rehabilitation and loan program to provide funding and/or other supports to remediate hazards.
- 5 Establish a city database of rental properties, listing their inspection status and noting any recent code violations.
- 6 Employ a staggered implementation period for rental registration, beginning with high-need areas and engaging landlords in the rollout.

For more information and resources

- [Center for Community Progress: Raising the Bar: A short guide to landlord incentives and rental property regulation \(Allan Mallach\)](#)
- [ChangeLab Solutions: A Guide to Proactive Rental Inspection Programs](#)
- [Mayors Innovation Project: Targeted Rental Licensing Programs: A Strategic Overview \(Jessica A. Bacher\)](#)
- [Center for Community Progress: Building American Cities Toolkit™](#)

Action Challenges

- 1 INFORM AND ENGAGE ALL RESIDENTS**
Empower residents to tackle housing quality issues. Launch a public awareness campaign on healthy housing and/or host a town hall to learn about residents' priorities, and serve as a convener for landlords, tenants, health care providers, social workers and teachers to support community organizing around health hazards.
- 2 TAKE STOCK OF HOUSING**
Review housing codes and enforcement policies. Produce an internal policy document on housing code enforcement policies, noting areas that can better support healthy and equitable housing policies. Catalogue and explore potential funding sources.
- 3 COME TOGETHER ON HOUSING HAZARDS**
Convene stakeholders to create a housing hazards task force. Engage city departments and external partners, with an emphasis on data-driven decision making, to identify and address lead and asthma challenges in housing for all population groups.
- 4 STRENGTHEN HEALTHY HOMES POLICIES AND PRACTICES**
Create resources and build commitment across stakeholders. Establish a registration system and database of rentals and associated violations that is available to tenants and use these tools to promote property standards and improve enforcement.

For More Information

Please visit
nlc.org/healthy-housing-mayors-challenge

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