DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Building Safety Division

LANDLORD/RENTAL REGISTRATION PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Rental Registration Program?

Under a Rental Registration Program, cities can keep track of who is renting out their properties and where those properties are. It is a database of all apartment buildings and other rental housing in the city. With Rental Registration, the city will have contact information for the owner of each building, as well as the property manager. Rental Registration Programs offer a way to keep track of code enforcement inspections. Rental Registration programs typically involve modest per building or unit fees to help with the costs of administering the program. Rental Registration can also be used as a means of authorizing landlords to operate in a community. If a landlord does not register property or does not abide by the property maintenance ordinances of a community, he/she could be placed on a register of noncompliance and, in extreme cases, could even be prevented from renting out properties in that community.

What are the benefits of Rental Registration Programs?

- Safety: The city will be able to contact owners or landlords at any time an emergency may occur. Unsafe conditions will be easier to spot and remedy when there are more inspectors visiting properties more often. Over time, increased inspections under a rental registration program will result in safer housing stock. This will benefit tenants and the larger community.

- Neighborhood stability and property value protection: Rental properties will be inspected more often, which will prevent minor code infractions from developing into bigger problems. This protects the character of neighborhoods as well as the value of property for landlords and homeowners.

- Rental accountability: The Rental Registration Program will be another tool to encourage landlords to be accountable for issues such as respecting the occupancy limit and lawful use of the dwelling, as well as maintaining sanitary and safe conditions. In extreme cases, a landlord may even be prevented from registering a property for rental if code violations are persistent, extensive, and serious and the landlord is uncooperative in pursuing corrections.

How does it work?

The City sends registration applications to property owners on an annual basis. These applications will also be available on-line. Property owners return the application along with an annual fee which covers program administration and more frequent inspections. Under the program, rental properties will be periodically inspected - roughly every three years - in addition to any tenant complaint inspections and regular commons area inspections.

Rental Registration is NOT:

- A list or affidavit of every resident in every rental unit
- A way for the city to generate revenue for non-housing enforcement related programs
- A way to make it harder or less profitable to operate rental housing in Urbana
- The only way to ensure safe housing in Urbana, but an essential tool to be used in conjunction with others

Rental Survey Results

Urbana staff sent out a survey to several other cities with major universities to see how they handle housing inspections and rental registration. This survey included questions about population, number of rental units, building inspection staff, and fees charged for inspection programs. Thirteen cities responded to the survey, with populations ranging from 22,000 to 115,000. Overall, most cities have some sort of licensing or registration program, and most cities charge fees for either rental registration, rental inspections, or both. Responding cities averaged 5.5 full-time and 2 part-time inspection staff, and inspect over 12,000 units in less than 2.5 years.

Most cities with Rental Registration Programs had a separate schedule of fees for single-family, duplex, small and large apartment buildings. Nearly all cities had both a per-building as well as a per-unit fee for apartment buildings.

Most of the respondents were larger cities that had a lower proportion of rental housing. The closest match to Urbana was Normal, Illinois. Normal is the smaller half of a twin-city region containing a state university, much like Champaign-Urbana. Their population is slightly higher than Urbana, at 45,000 and they have 8,000 rental units. Normal systematically inspects all of its apartment buildings every year. They have three full time housing inspectors, and their registration fees are $30 per building plus $15 per rental unit.

Urbana Rental Housing Facts

Here are some rental housing facts about Urbana from the 2000 Census, updated with City and Assessor records where feasible:

Population (corrected 2000 Census):	37,372
2004 Estimated Population (Census projection):	39,178
Total occupied housing units (2000 Census):	14,327
Percent of Housing Stock that is renter occupied (2000 Census):	63%

Rental Units (2005 estimates):	
Multi-Family (3+ units)	8,440
Two-Family	412
Single-Family	1,204
TOTAL	**10,056**