

Date: February 8, 2013

To: Mayor Robert Schumm, City of Lawrence

Cc: City Commissioners Dever, Cromwell, Amyx, and Carter; City Manager David Corliss

From: Laura Routh, Chair, Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods (LAN)

RE: LAN Support for expanded rental registration and inspection

LAN believes that it is municipal government's primary obligation to protect public health and safety. Thus, LAN supports the City's proposed expansion of rental registration and inspection for all Lawrence residential rental properties. We believe that this expansion is necessary to adequately enforce the City's building, zoning, fire, and health codes.

LAN is aware of ongoing problems with rental housing throughout Lawrence; we routinely hear reports of violations of zoning, building and safety codes, which can go largely unaddressed due to resource limitations within the Code Enforcement department. We believe an expanded rental registration and inspection program will give the City the data and resources necessary to operate a workable, cost-neutral program. It may also give City officials better ability to enforce code and zoning rules already on the books.

As proposed, an expanded program offers a number of additional benefits to tenants, landlords, and the community at large:

- An expanded program will level the playing field for all rental owners and operators, and thus will give the City the ability to reward good landlords.
- An expanded program will protect the health and safety of tenants and neighborhoods, and reduce the risk of apartment house fires, injury and death¹.
- An expanded program can offer City officials stronger tools to combat blight and address rentals with significant problems. Expansion of the program to all areas of the City will help prevent demolition by neglect, thus preserving historic residential properties and improving neighborhoods.
- An expanded program can offer residents and rental owners alike new resources and information that will improve overall quality of life in Lawrence.
- An expanded program will improve tenant safety, property standards and help resolve chronic negative conditions that exist in some Lawrence neighborhoods, particularly in campus areas.
- By requiring full disclosure of rental registration, consumers in the rental marketplace will be able to make fully informed decisions and City officials will be able to locate and communicate with rental owners.

We ask the City Commission to move forward, now, with this important initiative. It is necessary to safeguard tenants, neighborhoods, and the general welfare of our community.

We appreciate the Commission's consideration of our comments, and respectfully request that this memo be made part of the public record regarding this issue. Thank you.

¹ Some municipalities, after undertaking similar efforts, have seen fewer building fires: <http://www.rcnky.com/articles/2012/10/25/rental-inspection-program-gets-mixed-reaction>