



COUNCIL MEMBER LETITIA PLUMMER DDS

Houston City Council At-Large Position 4

During the FY22 budget meeting Council Member Plummer offered an amendment calling for apartment inspection reform. Our amendment outlines some objectives we wanted the reform to address. Most of the proposed changes are operational changes, such as enforcing certificate of occupancy requirements and consolidating inspection as much as possible. We are aware that the Habitability division is making significant progress in addressing areas of opportunity, such as having inspectors cross trained in all disciplines to improve inspection efficiency.

We believe there is one component or process that needs to be codified by an ordinance, which deals with how the City brings non-compliant properties into compliance under the habitability ordinance. These landlords and or property owners devalue the health and safety of the residents and thus their properties are falling apart, infested with rodents, bugs, and harbor criminal activity. Some cities call it a high impact landlord program and others call it a repeat offender program, but in this proposal, we will refer to it as "Apartment Inspection Reform" or A.I.R.

The habitability division already has a process in which they address these poor properties. We simply propose that this process be codified through an ordinance. The Austin ordinance should **only** be a guide in how we write ours. The Dallas minimum property standards are also attached and should only be used as a guide. Section 27-5.2 deals with retaliation protections for tenants and should be included in the City of Houston program. The ordinance for the program will simply be another tool to address non-compliant complexes.

There will be a registration fee no less than \$250 to be paid annually and the funds accrued will be used to increase the number of inspectors as necessary to ensure the program runs efficiently.

The program will work as follows:

- 1) When a property receives 2 or more citations for conditions that are dangerous or impair habitability within a given period they shall be required to register for AIR.
- 2) A registration fee shall be charged upon registration and every 12 months until all issues are addressed.
- 3) If ownership of the property changes hands, the new owner has 30 days to submit a new registration application and pay a new registration fee. If the property is made compliant within 90 days of the sale, then the property is released from AIR, but is still subject to the program if it falls into noncompliance later.



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- 4) The registration period shall last a minimum of two years and a property will remain registered until it is brought into compliance and stays in compliance for two consecutive years.
 - a. If a property completes registration and then is required to register a second time, then the registration period shall be for five years. The unit is still required to have two consecutive compliance years to exit the program that laps the registration period.
- 5) Properties must display their registration document in a public area of an on-site management office or other similar public area of the property. Failure to do so can result in a fine.
- 6) Landlords must be able to contact all tenants within two hours in an emergency.
- 7) Periodic inspections may occur once per year – not including the annual registration inspection.
- 8) Penalties shall be consistent with the habitability ordinance.
- 9) Protections shall exist for tenants that may face retaliation for making complaints such as those present in Section 27-5.2 of the Dallas Code of Ordinances.