



Rental Safety Verification Program

presented by
Suzanna Fritzberg, Deputy Chief of Staff and Policy Director
Tracy Skibins, Director of Code Enforcement

Prepared for the South Bend Common Council
Health and Public Safety Committee, February 25, 2019

Program Overview

Rentals account for about **40% of housing** in the City, and access to safe, affordable rental housing is consistently cited as a key issue by residents and service providers

Proposal: Improve the safety of rental housing in the City of South Bend, particularly for families with children, by verifying compliance with existing safety standards through proactive inspection



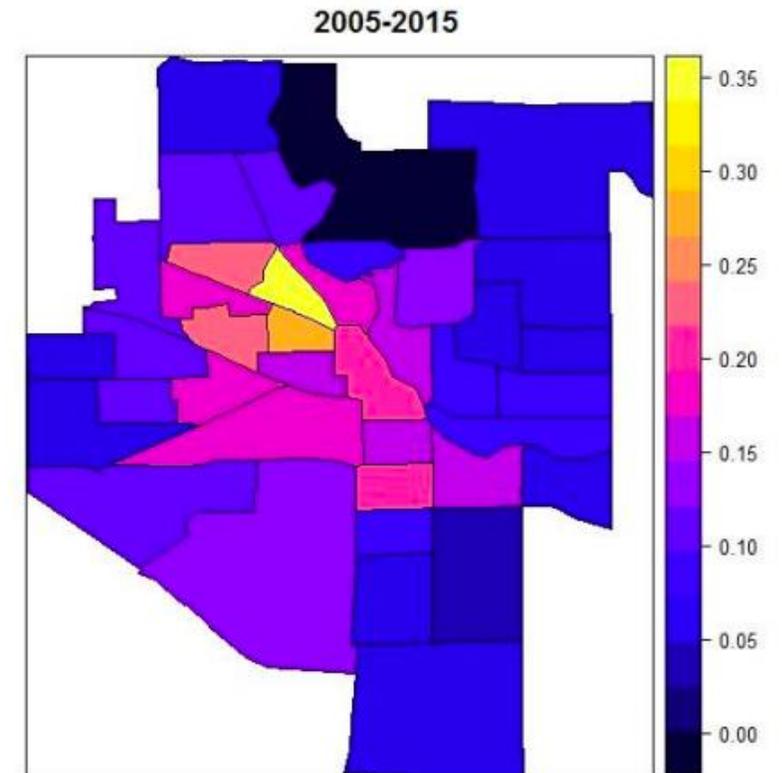
Housing and Health

Census data and Code records suggest that **a significant portion of rental units contain hazards that compromise safety and habitability** (for example: lead paint, mold, improper ventilation or fire detection systems).

Substandard housing conditions have been shown to be responsible for a range of significant and costly health problems, including asthma, child lead poisoning, and increased rates of injury and mortality.

Lead paint continues to be a health concern as **82.1% of all housing units are within structures built prior to the ban on lead paint in 1978.**

Children Under Age 7 with elevated blood lead levels ($\geq 5 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) by Census Tract

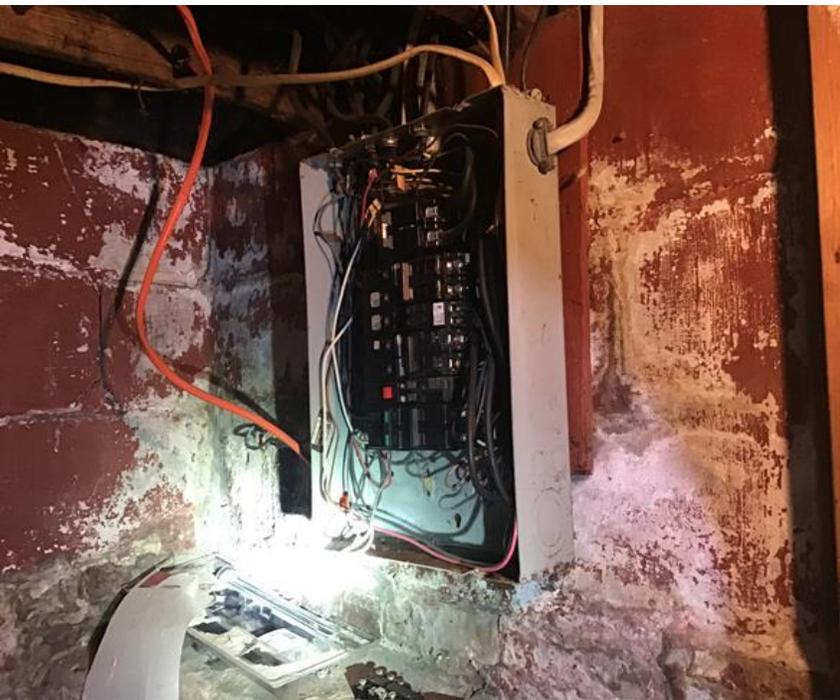


Rental Safety Violations

Current Code Enforcement Examples



RENTAL COMPLAINT



Rental Safety Verification Program

Proactive Rental Inspection

HUD Healthy Homes Principles

1. Dry

Prevent water from entering your home through leaks in roofing systems, rain water from entering the home due to poor drainage.

2. Clean

Control the source of dust and contaminants, creating smooth and cleanable surfaces.

3. Safe

Secure loose rugs. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and keep fire extinguishers on hand.

4. Well-Ventilated

Ventilate bathrooms and kitchens and use whole house ventilation for supplying fresh air to reduce the concentration of contaminants in the home.

5. Pest-free

All pests look for food, water and shelter. Seal cracks and openings throughout the home.

6. Contaminant-free

Reduce lead-related hazards in pre-1978 homes by fixing deteriorated paint, and keeping floors and window areas clean using wet-cleaning approach.

7. Maintained

Inspect, clean and repair home routinely. Take care of minor repairs and problems before they become large repairs and problems

8. Thermally Controlled

Houses that do not maintain adequate temperatures may place the safety of residents at increased risk from exposure to extreme cold or heat.

Proactive Rental Inspection



The Rental Safety Verification Program (RSVP) will promote the health and safety of renters in the City by proactively ensuring that rental properties meet **existing minimum quality standards of environmental and building maintenance.**

- A Code Enforcement inspector will look at the conditions of the property inside and outside the unit. The inspector will have a checklist of items to look for such as: chipping/peeling paint, visible leaks, working plumbing and electrical systems, proper sanitation, adequate heat.
- Upon the successful completion of inspection, Code Enforcement will issue a Certificate of Rental Safety, which remains valid for up to 5 years. A rental with a Certificate of Rental Safety is in compliance with minimum rental housing safety standards.
- Units with a valid Certificate of Rental Safety will be posted on the City website.

Inspection Checklist

20 minute visual inspection

Focus on minimum safety standards

Fire safety (smoke alarms, ingress/egress)

Water

Heat

Properly-installed plumbing and electrical systems

Mold or mildew

Chipping or peeling paint

Leaks

Program Implementation

Conservative Estimate: 7,500 units to inspect

Total number of occupied rental housing units: 16,690 (American Community Survey)

Apply 10% random sampling of multiunit properties: yields 9,018 multiunit inspections

- 2,251 units are part of multiunit properties with 5-9 units (10%)

- 2,513 units are part of multiunit properties with 10-19 units (10%)

- 4,009 units are part of multiunit properties with 20+ units (10%)

- 8,121 units are single-family or <5 multiunit (each unit inspected)

Reduce for exclusions: Government-inspected housing (incl. 2,064 Sec-8/HCV units), units constructed in past 10 years (350+ downtown, 800 single-family), or units receiving satisfactory real estate sales inspections in past 3 years

Feedback and Changes (1)

Implementation:

- Y1: Open Code cases, referrals from St. Joseph County Health Department, landlord requests
- Y2+: Geographic phase in, 15% per year in order of Census tracts with highest lead poisoning rates

Census tract 6, 19, 21, 30, 4, 5

Phase-In

RSVP Inspection Timeline		
Year	Units to Inspect	EOY Total Completed
2019	800	800
2020	1200	2000
2021	1200	3200
2022	1200	4400
2023	1200	5600
2024	1200	6800
2025	1200	8000

Starting in 2019, priority will be active code cases (n~670), Health Dept referrals (n<100), and Landlord Requests.

Staffing: Under current staffing levels, Code staff can conduct ~100 new rental safety inspections per month.

- 3 inspectors each conducting 8-9 RSVP inspections per week (24-27 total inspections per week).
- Housing inspectors also conduct complaint inspections and attend violation hearings. This timeframe accounts for reinspections.

Feedback and Changes (2)

- Simplification of Minimum Safety Standards
 - Ex: change from all windows openable to 1 window per habitable space, focus on mobility hazards rather than “good condition”
- Misc. language changes as delineated in substitute filing coverletter
- Removal of certificate transfer fee
- Addition of waiver eligibility for real estate sales transaction inspections in 3-yr window
- Removal of requirement to post rental occupancy certificate on outside of property
- Addition of potential self-inspection protocol for 5-yr certificate holders
- Change to multi-unit inspection from 10 units to 6 units
- Property-owner designated agent for purposes of scheduling and attending inspection can be tenant
- Community education workshops

Questions?

Questions?