



CITY OF ALLENTOWN

RESOLUTION

R 55 – 2021

Introduced by City Council on April 21, 2021

Allentown Landlord Accountability Resolution

Resolved by the Council of the City of Allentown, That

WHEREAS, Allentown has historically struggled to maintain the quality of its housing stock and has a pervasive and long-standing problem with slumlords; and

WHEREAS, Allentown City Council and the Administration recognize that quality, safe and affordable housing is a right for each resident; and

WHEREAS, the City of Allentown has moral, ethical and legal obligation to ensure that our residents live in housing without fear of discrimination on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, gender identity or income status; and

WHEREAS, slumlords and blighted properties contribute our city's homeless crisis, threaten the safety and stability of our neighborhoods and undermine the city's future; and

WHEREAS, Allentown City Council and the Administration recognize the need for a well-funded, strategic and comprehensive campaign to address slumlords and clean-up our housing stock, we're putting forth the following recommendations to address community concerns.

- Allentown will work to implement a point-based inspection system which will reward compliant and responsible landlords with less frequent and intensive inspections while targeting known slumlords with more regular inspections.
- Allentown will explore the resurrection of the slumlord hall of shame with carefully and objectively crafted criteria by consulting with established housing advocacy organizations to ensure a fair and objective standard of labeling slumlords.
- Allentown will explore adding additional housing attorneys who can more aggressively utilize state statutes such as Act 90 to hold slumlords accountable through pursuing their personal assets and pursuing criminal charges. Furthermore, to fulfill one of the strategic parameters of the Homeless Commission recommendations these attorneys will function as localized housing advocates providing assistance in mediating landlord tenant disputes, negotiating payment schedules to prevent eviction and working to address short-term homelessness.
- Allentown will collaborate with Lehigh County to form a Housing Court which will expressly deal with issues related to housing such as tenant concerns, lack of landlord compliance with city codes and potential evictions.

- Allentown will collaborate with Lehigh County to pre-screen sheriff sale bidders, disqualifying bidders with a history of delinquent properties or compliance issues preventing slumlords from acquiring additional inventory both in Allentown and throughout the county.
- Allentown will evaluate the use of Federal Funds to procure a former hotel or structure conducive to creating micro-dwelling units designed to create permeant supportive housing for those experiencing substance abuse or mental health crisis, LGBTQIA homeless, veterans and those in need of a supportive housing community.
- Allentown will identify a permeant and reoccurring source of revenue to capacitate both its Housing Trust Fund and Land Bank in order to proactively and expeditiously increase the supply of affordable housing stock and restore vacant properties to productive use.
- Allentown will work with landlords and city departments to provide all tenants with a list of their rights and available services ensuring they're well educated on their rights as renters and owners.
- Allentown encourages DCED to quickly implement the digitalization of the inspection and records process using both tablets and a database making it easier to track problem properties.
- Allentown City Council would like periodic updates on the progress of these housing solutions at Community and Economic Development Committee meetings and encourages their implementation in an expeditious timeframe given the severity of the crisis.

THEREFORE, IT BE RESOLVED, Allentown City Council and the Administration are committed to the execution of this strategy and supporting the Department of Community and Economic Development in ensuring they are successful in its implementation.