

# Greensboro isn't altering rental inspections — yet

• An advisory board doesn't recommend any changes, but city officials do take a keen interest.

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GREENSBORO — The city's rental housing inspections program will remain intact — at least for now.

The Rental Unit Certificate of Occupancy board has been debating whether to cut back inspections or requirements since the summer.

On Thursday, the City Council advisory board couldn't come to an agreement about what, if anything, to change. The board disbanded a task force that proposed major changes to the rental housing law without adopting any of their recommendations.

But this may not be the last word on Greensboro's controversial housing law.

The presence of three city council members and City Manager Rashad Young at the board's meeting Thursday suggests there is keen interest in how the program is — or is not — working.

"RUCO is a very important program in my estimation and it deserved my direct attention," Young wrote in an e-mail.

The program was adopted seven years ago to help root out slum housing. It requires all apartments or homes that are rented to have a city inspection and certification.

The program has been controversial due to its strain on the finances of landlords and the city — although it also has widely been praised for cleaning up Greensboro's housing.

The original program required rental housing to be inspected every five years.

When that proved to be an untenable goal, the rules were loosened so that an apartment wouldn't have to be inspected again unless there was a complaint about it — or it was part of the 2 percent randomly chosen to be reinspected each year.

Some have argued that the random sample is an inefficient use of city inspectors' time, given that only 10 percent of units inspected have had problems.

With that in mind, board member Jeff Sim suggested eliminating random inspections.

That could mean apartments inspected and certified once wouldn't be seen by city inspectors again unless there were a complaint.

City Engineering and Inspections Director Walter "Butch" Simmons said the staff could support eliminating the random inspections for apartment buildings with three or more units, but not for single family homes where they have had the most difficulty.

The board didn't agree with either suggestion. Members opted not to recommend changes to the ordinance. They disbanded the task force that came up with a recommended redraft of the law.

But the issue isn't dead. Councilwoman Nancy Vaughan stressed to the board that there may be opportunities to fine-tune the bureaucracy.

Councilman Robbie Perkins, the council's liaison to the board, recommended the board reconsider the ordinance after a planned reorganization of the city inspections divisions and a new department head is hired.

"We might find RUCO in an entirely different position in a year from today," Perkins said.

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