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Council moves ahead on rental inspections

Once committee looks at the issue, an ordinance is likely to deal with violations.

By Terri Hardy - Bee Staff Writer

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The city is moving forward with a new citywide inspection program that will put Sacramento's estimated 75,000 rental properties under review for health and safety violations.

Next, the plan will go to a subcommittee to work out details and draft an ordinance.

"It's unacceptable to allow property owners to rent substandard housing to people in our community," said Councilwoman Bonnie Pannell.

All council members appeared to support the plan, which would expand a successful pilot operation that found problems in more than a third of rentals viewed.

Debate, however, was heated over whether to send the issue back to the law and legislation subcommittee or to bring it directly back to the council.

"I think there are people who think it's being sent to Law and Legislation to kill it, to run out the clock, to make it go away," said Councilman Kevin McCarty.

Councilwoman Sandy Sheedy, chairwoman of the subcommittee, said she supports the inspection program and resented comments that efforts were being made to eliminate it.

Advocates for property owners also asked the matter be reviewed by the subcommittee.

Mayor Heather Fargo said she would work with Sheedy to ensure the program was moved through the city's process.

Because they did not want the issue to go to the subcommittee, Pannell, Councilwoman Lauren Hammond and Councilman Kevin McCarty voted against the proposal. Councilman Robbie Waters was absent.

The pilot program looked at 970 properties determined to have exterior violations. Interior reviews revealed host of problems, including faulty wiring and plumbing, missing or malfunctioning smoke detectors, dry rot and peeling paint.

The inspections were conducted in portions of the city's most problematic neighborhoods of Oak Park and Dixieanne in North Sacramento. The homes were targeted by mapping dangerous housing cases, code-enforcement cases, rental properties and police and fire calls.

About 90 percent of landlords corrected the problems within one month, with the city levying fees in only 38 cases.

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