

Dear Mayor From and Members of the University Heights City Council;

I was asked to provide a summary report for FY 2013 that would catalog the number of inspections conducted, the major violations found during inspections, as well as inspections done due to complaints from citizens. In addition, I was asked to provide any recommendations for improving city processes.

In FY 2013, 108 rental inspections were conducted. Of those 108 inspections, 14 were new rentals, and 18 were re-inspections to correct cited violations.

The most common violations cited in FY 2013 were of the fire-safety/life-safety category. Inoperable, improperly located, missing or old smoke alarms, as well as missing or improperly sized fire extinguisher, and improper storage of combustible materials were the most commonly cited fire-safety violations. Life-safety items such as improperly vented water heaters, furnaces and dryers, missing or unsecured handrails and guardrails, improperly grounded or inoperable electrical receptacles and tripping hazards were also cited.

Some of these violations were corrected as the inspection was being conducted. If not, then a follow up inspection was scheduled to assure compliance. No more than a few of these re-inspections required more than 1 visit.

Complaint inspections were mostly about tall grass or over occupancy and those complaints were usually forwarded to me through city council, the mayor, or the city clerk.

There were 9 over occupancy complaint inspections conducted in FY13. 8 were complaint generated and 1 was observed during an inspection. Follow up investigations revealed that 1 property was over occupied and that occupancy was reduced within 21 days. 2 other properties gave written statements testifying to the familial relationships of the tenants. 5 of the other properties were found to be in compliance. There was insufficient evidence to pursue legal action at 1 property.

There were 7 tall grass complaints that were inspected and compliance was achieved.

I was also asked, as part of the yearly report, to provide input into what areas of improvement I think would benefit city government. One area of improvement I would suggest would be to purchase a basic web-based, property data software system that would track, catalog and cross reference any and all property records electronically; i.e. building permits, electrical permits, plumbing permits, rental permits, complaint notices, zoning board decisions, etc. This system would thereby establish a historical archive, a track record if you will, for each property in University Heights, which I believe is an essential component for zoning, building and rental enforcement. As the city grows and moves forward, the need for historical archiving such as this will become indispensable, in my opinion.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to serving the community in the upcoming fiscal year.

Norm Cate  
Housing/Building inspector