

Zoning, Landmarks and Building

Resolution Creating the Problem Landlord and Housing Court Coordination Task Force

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago has an obligation to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and to ensure that residential properties are maintained in compliance with the City's Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago has established procedures for identifying building code scofflaws and problem landlords, including owners who have repeatedly been subject to enforcement proceedings resulting in findings of liability for serious building code violations; and

WHEREAS, Section 2-92-416 of the Municipal Code establishes the City's definition of a "problem landlord" and authorizes the Commissioner of Buildings, in consultation with the Corporation Counsel, to maintain a list of building code scofflaws and problem landlords; and

WHEREAS, despite the City's existing enforcement authority, residents and community stakeholders continue to encounter challenges involving chronically neglected residential properties, repeated building code violations, unsafe living conditions, delayed repairs, displacement, and landlords who repeatedly appear in enforcement and housing-related proceedings; and

WHEREAS, effective enforcement of housing and building standards frequently requires coordination among multiple governmental entities, including the Department of Buildings, the Department of Law, the Office of the Mayor, the City Council, and the Circuit Court of Cook County; and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Court of Cook County's First Municipal District includes a Housing Section that handles housing-related matters, including eviction proceedings and other matters affecting landlords and tenants; and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Court of Cook County has previously implemented programs designed to improve coordination and assistance in eviction proceedings, demonstrating the potential value of collaboration among governmental agencies and housing stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, residents should not be required to navigate disconnected government systems when serious and recurring housing violations involve both municipal enforcement and court proceedings; and

WHEREAS, improved communication, information sharing, case coordination, and identification of repeat offenders may allow governmental entities to address chronic housing problems more efficiently while protecting the due process rights of property owners, landlords, and tenants; and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes that a coordinated examination of the City's existing problem-landlord enforcement mechanisms and the interaction between municipal enforcement proceedings and the Cook County court system is warranted; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

SECTION 1. The City Council hereby establishes the Problem Landlord and Housing Court Coordination Task Force ("Task Force") for the purpose of examining and recommending improvements to the City's response to chronic and repeat housing code violations and the coordination of those matters with the Circuit Court of Cook County.

SECTION 2. Membership. The Task Force shall consist of representatives from the following governmental entities:

1. Three (3) members of the Chicago City Council, appointed by the President Pro Tempore or other appropriate Council leadership, including at least one member representing a ward with significant residential building-code enforcement activity;
2. One (1) representative of the Office of the Mayor, designated by the Mayor;
3. One (1) representative of the Department of Buildings, designated by the Commissioner of Buildings;
4. One (1) representative of the Department of Law, designated by the Corporation Counsel; and
5. One (1) representative designated by the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, preferably with knowledge of housing, eviction, or municipal enforcement proceedings.

The Task Force may invite representatives of tenant organizations, landlord and property-owner associations, legal aid organizations, housing advocates, community organizations, and other governmental agencies to participate in meetings or provide testimony and recommendations.

SECTION 3. Duties. The Task Force shall examine and make recommendations concerning:

- a. The City's existing identification and enforcement of problem landlords and building code scofflaws;
- b. The frequency and nature of repeat building code violations involving the same property owners, corporate entities, affiliated entities, or properties;
- c. The coordination of information between the Department of Buildings, Department of Law, City Council, and the Circuit Court of Cook County, subject to applicable laws concerning confidentiality, privacy, judicial independence, and due process;
- d. Opportunities to improve the City's ability to identify landlords and ownership entities with repeated or serious violations across multiple properties;

- e. The relationship between municipal building-code enforcement proceedings and related housing, eviction, receivership, injunction, or other court proceedings;
- f. Opportunities to reduce unnecessary delays in resolving serious and recurring housing violations;
- g. Procedures for identifying cases in which a landlord or property owner has multiple outstanding violations across multiple properties;
- h. Opportunities to improve communication with tenants regarding the status of building-code enforcement and related court proceedings;
- i. Potential mechanisms for earlier intervention when a residential property demonstrates a pattern of serious or recurring violations;
- j. Whether additional City ordinances, administrative procedures, intergovernmental agreements, legislative changes, or State legislation are necessary to improve enforcement against chronic problem landlords;
- k. Opportunities to improve coordination between City attorneys and attorneys representing the City in court proceedings involving serious housing and building-code violations;
- l. Best practices used by other municipalities or courts to address repeat housing-code offenders and chronic residential building violations; and
- m. Any additional recommendations necessary to protect tenants, improve housing conditions, preserve the rights of responsible property owners, and ensure that serious violations are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

SECTION 4. Court Coordination. Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed to direct, control, interfere with, or otherwise limit the independent authority of the Circuit Court of Cook County or any judge thereof. Participation by the Chief Judge or the Chief Judge's designee shall be for purposes of coordination, information sharing, identification of systemic issues, and development of recommendations within the respective legal authorities of the participating governmental entities.

SECTION 5. Data and Information. The Task Force shall evaluate the feasibility of establishing a coordinated process through which appropriate City departments may identify and track properties and ownership entities associated with recurring serious building-code violations, subject to applicable privacy laws, confidentiality requirements, court rules, and due process protections.

The Task Force shall specifically examine whether existing City databases and enforcement records can be better coordinated to identify patterns involving common ownership, affiliated

entities, repeat violations, unpaid fines, outstanding court orders, and unresolved building-code violations.

SECTION 6. Recommendations. The Task Force shall consider recommendations that may include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Improved interdepartmental case management;
2. A coordinated referral process for serious or repeat violations;
3. Enhanced identification of common ownership among multiple properties;
4. Improved communication between City enforcement personnel and the appropriate court representatives;
5. Procedures for prioritizing properties presenting significant health or safety risks;
6. Improved mechanisms for monitoring compliance with court orders and City enforcement actions;
7. Legislative recommendations to the Illinois General Assembly where changes in State law are necessary; and
8. Additional resources, technology, staffing, or administrative changes necessary to improve enforcement.

SECTION 7. Report. Within 180 days after the first meeting of the Task Force, the Task Force shall submit a written report to the President of the City Council, the City Council Committee on Housing and Real Estate, the Committee on License and Consumer Protection, the Mayor, the Commissioner of Buildings, and the Corporation Counsel.

The report shall include:

- a. A summary of the Task Force's findings;
- b. An assessment of existing City enforcement and coordination procedures;
- c. Identification of significant gaps or barriers in the current system;
- d. Recommendations for administrative and operational improvements;
- e. Recommendations for any necessary amendments to the Chicago Municipal Code;
- f. Recommendations for potential State legislative changes;
- g. Identification of data or technology improvements that could assist in identifying repeat problem landlords and properties; and

h. Any other recommendations deemed appropriate by the Task Force.

SECTION 8. Meetings. The Task Force shall meet at least once every 60 days until submission of its final report. The first meeting shall occur no later than 60 days after the effective date of this Resolution.

SECTION 9. Sunset. The Task Force shall conclude its work upon submission of its report, unless the City Council adopts a subsequent resolution extending its existence.

SECTION 10. Severability. If any provision of this Resolution is held invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

This Resolution shall be in full force and effect upon its passage and approval.



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