

RENTAL HOUSING REGISTRY & INSPECTION PROGRAM

January 24, 2024
Ordinance Proposal Public Hearing

City of Essex Junction



What is a Rental Registry and Inspection Program?

- Registration Requirement
- Regular Inspections towards a set standard
- Municipal programs in place in:
 - Barre
 - Brattleboro
 - Burlington
 - St. Albans
 - St. Johnsbury
 - Winooski





Rentals are a significant part of Essex Junction's housing supply

- ~40% of housing units in EJ are Rentals
- New housing stock = predominantly rentals.





279

Estimated Total
Rented Properties



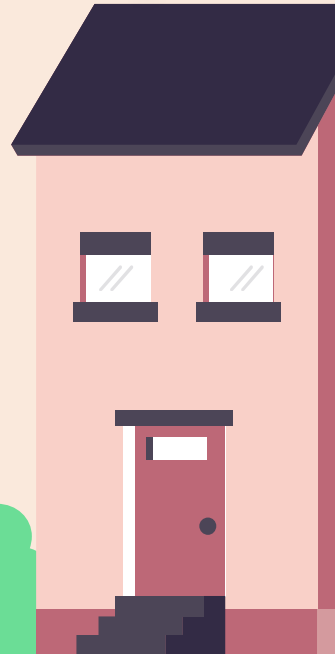
1954

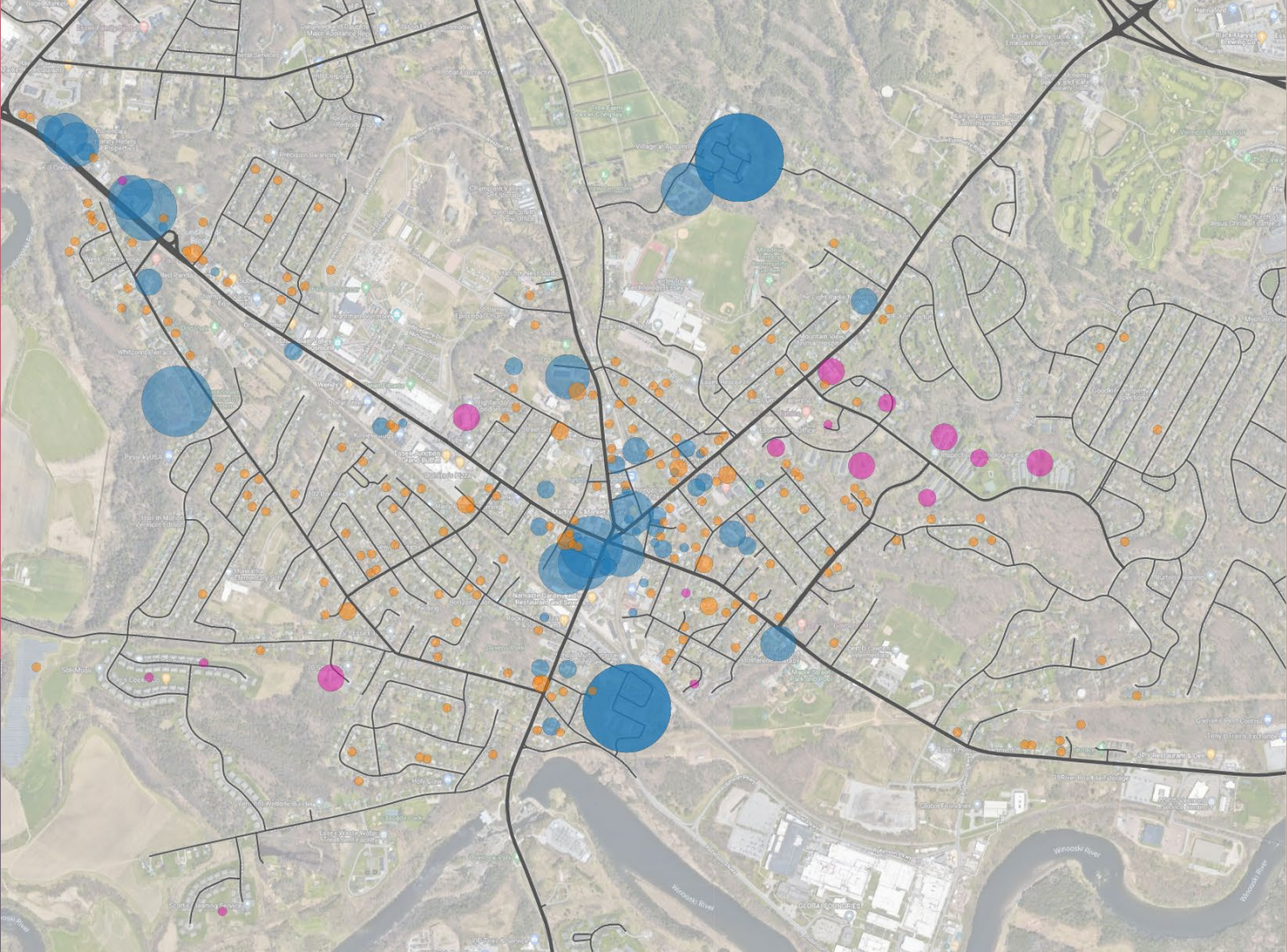
Estimated Total
Rented Units



116

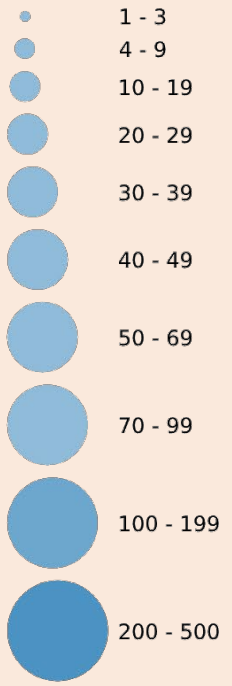
Estimated Rental Units
within Condominiums





Rental Unit Estimates

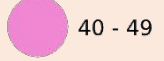
Commercial Apartment Units



Other Rental Units



Condominium Rental Units



History of the Proposed Program

- **2016-** Rental Registry first investigated at the request of a resident

Village Board saw presentation from the City of Burlington staff on their existing program



History of the Proposed Program

- **2019-** Comprehensive Plan

Goal 1: Provide a variety of housing opportunities for all present and future residents of the Village of Essex Junction while creating and preserving quality residential environments and existing neighborhood characteristics.

Objective 1.7: Identify funding to compile a rental registry and rental inspection program.



History of the Proposed Program

- **2019-** Comprehensive Plan (continued)

“A major component of this Plan is to ensure that these aspects of Thoughtful Growth are met through maintenance of existing housing and development of new housing.”



History of the Proposed Program

- **2020-** Joint Housing Commission was created in Village Board and Town Selectboard meeting

Rental and housing discussed as an area of focus

Rental registry and inspection program specifically requested by a member of the public



History of the Proposed Program

- **2021-** Joint Housing Commission created taskforce to explore the creation of the Rental Registry & Inspection (RR&I) program

Ultimately decided to table it pending the outcome of the 2021 State Senate S.79 Statewide Rental Registry bill.

That bill ultimately did not pass.



History of the Proposed Program

- **2022-** State Legislature transferred primary responsibility of the Rental Housing Code to form the Department of Health to the Division of Fire Safety (DFS)

Changes implemented in December 2023

DFS added several State Fire Marshalls to provide limited complaints-based inspection program



History of the Proposed Program

- **2023-** City Planning Commission (PC) examined other municipal RR&I programs throughout Vermont

PC ultimately recommended a draft ordinance to City Council

UVM Master of Public Administration students also studied RR&I and provided the City with a report and presentation as a part of a capstone project





Proposed Ordinance

- Municipal Code Chapter 20 – Rental Registry and Inspection
- Full ordinance available at [bit.ly/EJ Rental Registry](https://bit.ly/EJ_Rental_Registry)
- Also available in City Council Packet



Proposed Ordinance Objectives

- Protect the life and safety of all residential renters,
- Develop inventory of residential rental properties in Essex Junction, and
- Improve opportunities to connect landlords to adequate resources for improving their properties



What would be regulated under this Ordinance?

1. Rental Housing, defined as:

all dwellings, dwelling units, rooming houses, rooming units, or mobile home lots let by the owner to one or more persons to be used as a regular residence, or as defined in the current version of Vermont Residential Rental Housing Health & Safety Code



What would be regulated under this Ordinance?

2. Short-Term Rental (STR), defined as:

a dwelling unit that is rented to guests for less than thirty (30) consecutive days and for more than 14 days per calendar year, is subject to the Vermont rooms and meals tax, and is either a:

(a) Partial Unit, meaning a room located within a host's primary residence that is used primarily for sleeping purposes by human occupants and that contains at least seventy (70) square feet of floor area; or

(b) Whole Unit, meaning an entire dwelling unit.



What would be regulated under this Ordinance?

Owner-Occupied Exemption

Owner-occupied dwellings units containing 1 or 2 rooms which are rented out for compensation and partial unit short term rentals would be exempt from registration and inspection requirements

Vermont Rental Housing Health & Safety Code still applies!



Inspection Procedures

- Every unit will be inspected at least every 5 years
- Inspection frequency determined based on risk factors such as:
 - Violation history of unit
 - Age of building
 - Complaints history





Inspection Procedures

- If deficiencies are found, landlord will be notified, and given time to address issues
- Re-inspections for non-compliance within 90 days would be free
- When conditions are met, inspector will issue a Certificate of Fitness, valid for 1-5 years.



Fee Structure



- \$120 per unit per year charged to landlords
- No additional fee for regular inspections
- No additional fee for re-inspections for non-compliance within 3 months
- \$120 fee for re-inspections for non-compliance after 3 months.





Public Engagement

- Information postcard sent to every address in EJ and to all landlords
- Also communicated through website, social media, and print media
- Previously received public comments are in the packet



See bit.ly/EJRentalRegistry for more info

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