

City of Longmont
Community Services

Survey of Landlords

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Elise Flesher, PhD

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City of Longmont
Survey of Landlords
September 25, 2017

Introduction

In 2016, the City of Longmont commissioned two studies to evaluate the housing and human service needs in Longmont and whether adequate resources were successfully addressing them. Both studies found that the highest priority need in our community was locating affordable housing and sufficient income to retain it.

Background Data

There are a number of variables which continue to impact the local housing crisis. Longmont Housing Authority, which controls Section 8 Vouchers, has a multiple year waiting list. While many landlords who once took vouchers no longer do so, the Housing Authority continues to identify landlords who will. The City of Longmont eliminated the inclusionary zoning ordinance, which previously mandated that new housing developments set aside 10 percent of the homes as affordable housing. Wages remain stagnant and have not increased to meet the cost of housing.

U.S. Census estimates that there are 35,203 separate households in Longmont. About 28 percent involve multi-family dwellings (n=9,849). The landlords we surveyed included those with one unit to those with several hundred. The two largest rental agencies in Longmont are PML with 500 units and PMP with 681 units.

In Boulder County, a total of 901 housing vouchers have been awarded. From Boulder County housing officials, 44 percent of their vouchers are used in Longmont (n=344). Boulder Housing Partners (for the City of Boulder) has placed 13 percent of their voucher holders in Longmont (n=148). All of Longmont Housing Authority vouchers holders reside in Longmont (n=409).

Service Provider Interviews

In late summer 2017, local service providers for low to moderate income clients were interviewed. We hoped to learn why some of their clients were at risk for eviction or non-renewal of lease, and what might be done to prevent it. In short, Table 1 identifies the key variables.

Table 1
Reasons housing is at risk & possible remedies (service provider response)

Reasons housing is at risk	Possible remedies
Tenant behavior (noise, violence, disorder, damage)	Case management (for tenant)
Loss of income, unanticipated bills	Mediation
Rental market value outpaces income	Help with rent or deposit dollars
Non-payment of rent; lease violation	Debt alleviation fund
Conflict with landlord, neighbors, family	Damage mitigation fund (for landlords)

Based on those findings, we elected to ask landlords similar questions. We wanted to ensure that whatever preventive response we took would be an informed and educated one.

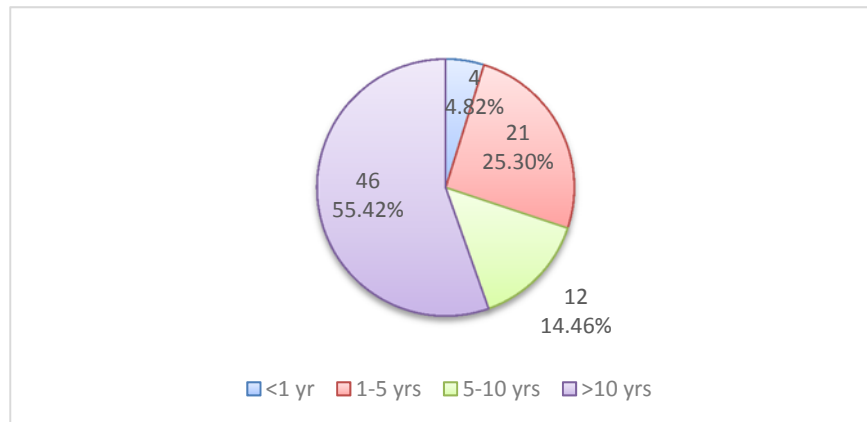
Landlord Survey

As a second phase of our analysis, we surveyed landlords in Longmont to determine the issues they are facing and whether their assessment regarding housing loss and remedies mirror those indicated by our service providers. A survey monkey was created and sent to a large list of landlords that had been captured by the City of Longmont Office of Community and Neighborhood Resources. While the list may not be exhaustive, it was extensive, including 853 landlord names. Landlords were asked 11 questions, with room to provide additional comments and alternative answers to the questions. The survey was issued on Thursday, September 7, 2017 and closed on Friday, September 22, 2017. Susan Spaulding, Community Relations Specialist with the City of Longmont Office of Community and Neighborhood Resources sent a message on August 20, 2017 to the database of landlords letting them know that a city-sponsored survey would be coming their way in the following week, and asking that they take the time to complete it. A reminder message was sent on September 22, 2017 asking the landlords who hadn't completed the survey, to please do so. Of the 853 surveys emailed, 23 landlords opted out and five were returned for an invalid address. For the remaining 835 sent, 83 were completed, for a response rate of 10 percent (valid with a 95% level of confidence and a 10 percent margin of error). However, since many of the respondents declined to answer the full survey, the more accurate response rate falls to 58. With that response rate, the confidence level drops to 90% with a 10 percent margin of error.

Findings

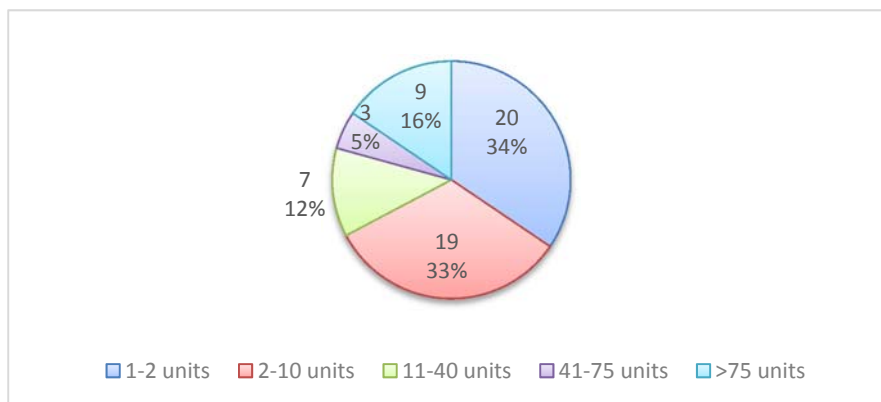
Landlords were first asked how long they have owned or managed their current rental property(ies). If they had several, we asked to indicate the years since their first acquisition. Most landlords (55 percent) have held their properties for over 10 years. The second tier has owned property for 1 to 5 years. Only a small percent are new landlords to Longmont.

Chart 1
Length of time landlord has owned or managed rental property (n=83)



Landlords were asked to identify the number of units they currently rent. Most (67 percent) are situated in smaller complexes (less than 10 units).

Chart 2
Number of units currently rented (n=58)



Landlords were asked to list the number of apartments they currently rent to voucher holders. From the table below, the survey recorded 19 landlords holding 59 voucher units.

Table 2
Number of units rented to voucher holders

Number of landlords	Number of vouchers per landlord	Total voucher units based on survey
7	1	7
4	2	8
4	3	12
1	4	4
1	5	5
1	8	8
1	15	15
		total=59

Only 38 percent of the landlords accept vouchers. Sixty-two percent indicated that they did not (n=58). To drill down further, landlords were asked why they might pursue eviction proceedings or decline to renew a lease for certain tenants. We asked them to differentiate the reasons based on whether the tenant was a voucher holder or a self-pay renter. Tables 4 and 5 provide that breakdown.

The final column in each table highlights the issues that affects over 50 percent of either voucher holding or self-paying renters (entitled "sum"). Overall, landlords seem to be experiencing more problems with voucher holding tenants. The predominant concerns seem to center on behavioral issues rather than the ability to reliably pay rent. While landlords are concerned that voucher dollars do not match what the market can bear, their concern tends to focus on tenants damaging the property, failing to provide adequate upkeep, interpersonal conflict, and breaking conditions of the lease. For self-pay renters, landlords are concerned about reliable payment and what certain life crisis may do to a renter's ability to pay. While behaviors such as property damage and lease conformity are noted for both groups, they aren't as over-riding with self-payers. High concern (the "sum" being measured as over 30 percent

and highlighted in red) are noted in seven categories for voucher holding tenants, while only 4 "high" concern categories apply to self-pay renters.

Table 3

Reasons landlords pursued eviction proceedings or declined to renew leases (voucher holders)

	% yes	Voucher 25%	Voucher 25-50%	Voucher 50-75%	Voucher >75%	Sum
Doesn't pay reliably	85.0	75.6	7.3	9.8	7.3	17.1
Breaks rules of lease	77.5	51.2	17.1	17.1	14.6	31.7
Disorder	65.0	51.4	18.9	10.8	18.9	29.7
Damages property	67.5	44.7	18.4	15.8	21.0	36.8
Poor upkeep	62.5	52.6	15.8	15.8	15.8	31.6
Difficult to deal with	50.0	52.9	11.8	14.7	20.6	35.3
Police calls for service	45.0	54.6	24.2	0	21.2	21.2
Drug/alcohol	45.0	66.7	10.0	3.3	20.0	23.3
Conflict w/neighbors	32.5	56.7	13.3	6.7	23.3	30.0
Violence	30.0	71.4	5.6	0	20.0	20
Hoarding	25.0	76.7	6.7	3.3	13.3	16.6
Pets	17.5	79.3	3.4	3.4	13.8	17.2
Recent hardship	15.0	73.5	2.9	11.8	11.8	23.6
Bad kids	15.0	64.5	9.7	0	25.8	25.8
Can't make repair bills	17.5	58.3	11.1	13.9	16.7	30.6
Renter needy	7.5	58.6	17.2	6.9	17.2	24.1
Voucher dollars too low	2.5	62.2	2.7	10.8	24.3	35.1

Table 4

Reasons landlords pursued eviction proceedings or declined to renew leases (self-pay renters)

	% yes	Self-pay 25%	Self-pay 25-50%	Self-pay 75%	Self-pay >75%	Sum
Doesn't pay reliably	85.0	42.6	25.5	6.4	25.5	31.9
Breaks rules of lease	77.5	39.5	27.9	7.0	25.6	32.6
Disorder	65.0	55.3	26.3	2.6	15.8	18.4
Damages property	67.5	44.8	23.7	13.2	18.4	31.6
Poor upkeep	62.5	43.5	30.4	8.7	17.4	26.1
Difficult to deal with	50.0	51.3	23.1	5.1	20.5	25.6
Police calls for service	45.0	61.3	12.9	3.2	22.6	25.8
Drug/alcohol	45.0	63.4	18.2	9.1	9.1	18.2
Conflict w/neighbors	32.5	73.3	10	6.7	10	16.7
Violence	30.0	65.5	17.2	0	17.2	17.2
Hoarding	25.0	71.4	13.8	3.4	10.3	13.7
Pets	17.5	67.9	21.4	3.6	7.1	10.7
Recent hardship	15.0	51.5	15.2	18.2	15.2	33.4
Bad kids	15.0	77.8	11.1	3.7	7.4	11.1
Can't make repair bills	17.5	64.3	17.9	10.7	7.1	17.8
Renter needy	7.5	35.2	21.7	4.4	8.7	13.1
Voucher dollars too low	2.5	69.2	7.7	7.7	15.4	23.1

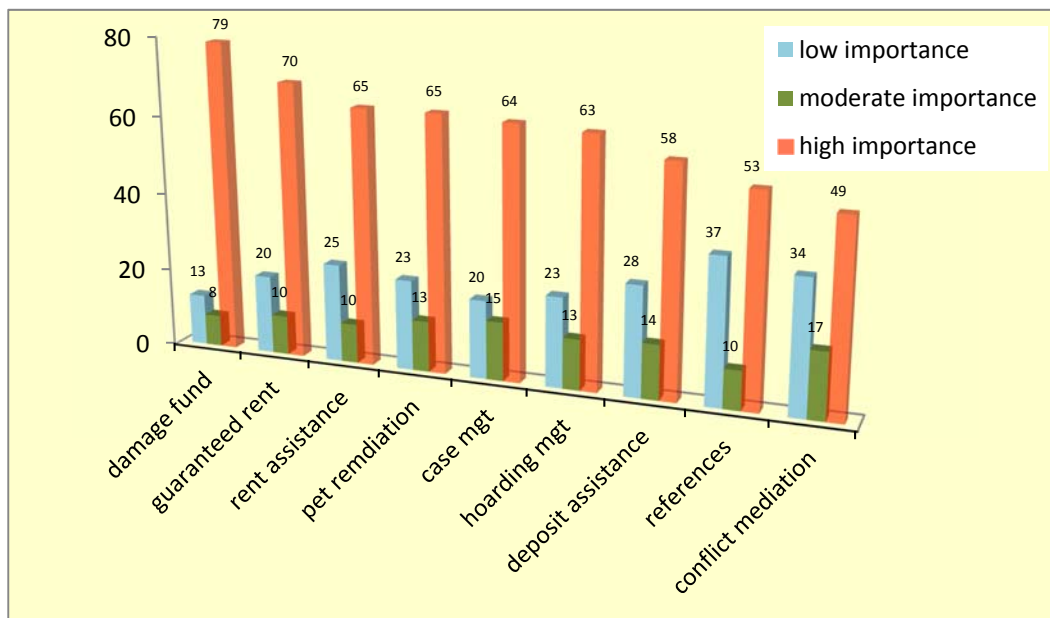
Since low to moderate income Longmont residents are likely to need some sort of housing assistance, we asked the landlords what it might take for them to open up more units to voucher holding tenants. We asked them to rank what assurances or incentives might the City provide that would increase their willingness to rent to voucher holders. A number 1 ranking indicated the least important reason; a rank of 5 as most important. Note that twenty-six landlords indicated an unwillingness to take vouchers at all.

Table 5
Actions to encourage landlords to increase the number of voucher tenants

Action	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total (n)	Weighted average
Fund to reimburse for damages	10.7%	2.1%	8.5%	25.5%	53.2%	47	4.09
Guaranteed rent payment	14.6%	4.9%	9.8%	9.8%	61%	41	3.98
Hoarding clean up	13.3%	10%	13.3%	20%	43.3%	30	3.70
Someone to case manage the tenant	12.8%	7.7%	15.4%	28.2%	35.9%	39	3.67
Financial assistance with rent	20%	5.0%	10%	17.5%	47.5%	40	3.67
Pet/service animal remediation	19.4%	3.2%	12.9%	32.3%	32.3%	31	3.55
Deposit assistance	22.2%	5.6%	13.9%	19.4%	38.9%	36	3.47
Someone to mediate conflict	25.7%	8.6%	17.1%	20%	28.6%	35	3.17
Personal references	26.7%	10%	10%	26.7%	26.7%	30	3.17

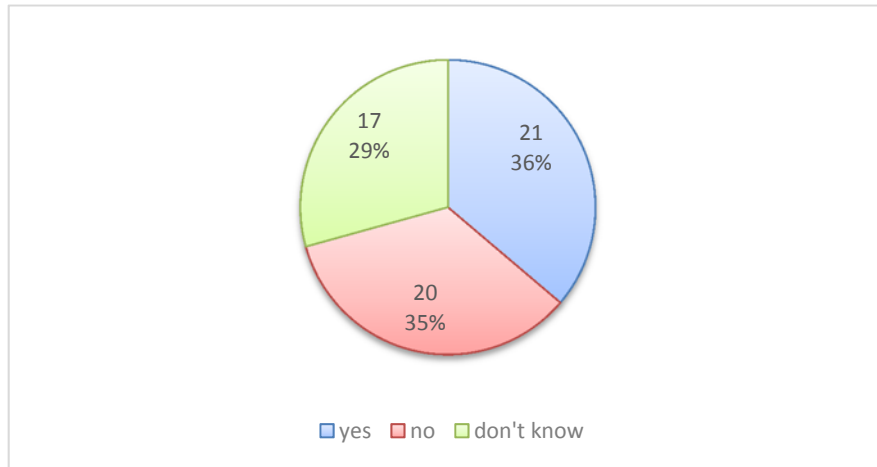
The following chart collapses the categories into low (rank 1-2), moderate (rank 3), and high (rank 4-5) importance. Clearly, landlords and managers are in business to make a living. Guaranteed income and well maintained property assures that ownership and management can be lucrative. These are some of the assurances landlords seek. As to behavioral concerns, they may be best addressed through tenant case management and/or third party oversight.

Chart 3
Assistance landlords would value in accepting voucher holding tenants



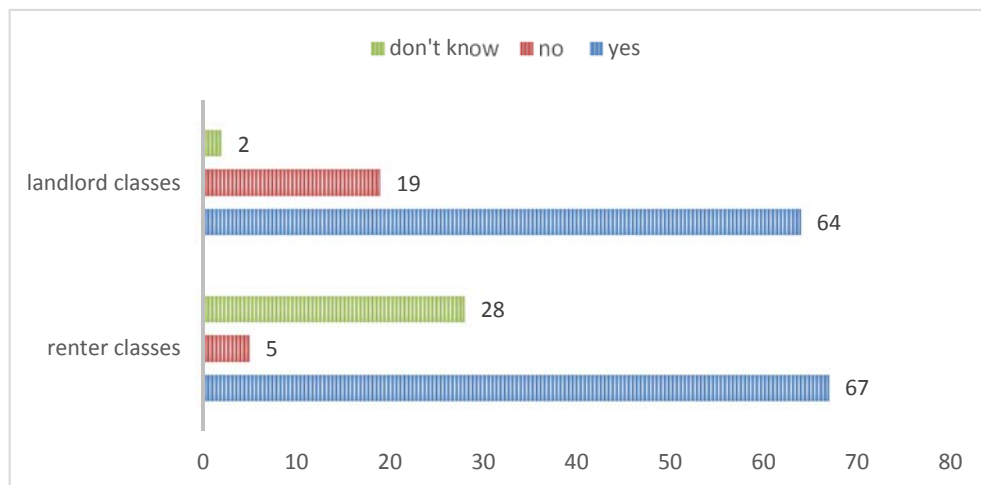
Landlords were asked if they were currently participating in the Longmont Police Department's sponsored Crime Free Housing Program. This program provides guidance and requirements that landlords must undertake in order to certify their property as "crime-free." This includes careful screening of tenants, Crime-Prevention through Environment Design (CPTED) evaluation and correction, and an ongoing relationship with the police department to address any problem tenants. A little over one-third participated, another third did not, and the last third was uncertain.

Chart 4
Participation in the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program



Most landlords supported additional training for both themselves and their tenants. They were asked if they would support classes that would help them be better landlords and their tenants to be better tenants. The greater percent indicated "yes," especially as it pertained to renters.

Chart 5
Percent of landlords that support "how to be a good landlord" & "how to be a good tenant" classes



Summary

From the service provider interviews and landlord survey, there are several conclusions that can be made. Landlords are in the business to make a living. It's important to them that they rent to tenants who can pay reliably, take care of the premises, handle minor repairs, and be congenial to them and co-tenants. Since the cost of housing is high, and wages stagnant, low and moderate income residents will continue to need some financial assistance. Service providers and landlords agree that certain tenants will be more successful in maintaining housing if they have the support of a case manager. This is someone who can act as intermediary, problem solve issues, help develop a self-sustainability plan, mediate conflicts, and provide or refer to a variety of community resources. In addition, some landlord incentives should include money to cover extensive property damage or lack of maintenance caused by a tenant, mediation with tenants who are hoarders or in conflict with neighbors, and to cover the difference between what voucher dollars cover, and current rental costs.