

723 N.W. 19 St.
Gainesville FL 32603
18 August 2020

Lauren Poe, Mayor
David Arreola, Commissioner, District III
Adrian Hayes-Santos, Commissioner, District IV
Gail Johnson, Commissioner, At Large
Reina Saco, Commissioner, At Large
Gigi Simmons, Commissioner, District 1
Harvey Ward, Commissioner, District II
City of Gainesville

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

A little over a year ago, your Rental Housing Subcommittee submitted its report. It had six recommendations. July 16th this year, you considered the recommendation “**Draft Ordinance to Create Permit Requirements for Residential Rental Units and to Adopt the International Property Maintenance Code and Related Recommendations**” from that Committee (City of Gainesville File 180958).

And as predictably as hot rainy days in a Gainesville summer, the opposition is animated and noisy. The proposed provisions for safe, energy efficient housing and for respect of basic human rights are characterized by the opponents as a “burden” on landlords.

But what about the burden on renters? Isn't it a burden to *de facto* force a renter to be a skilled housing inspector, able to detect faulty plumbing or energy wasting HVAC? Isn't a burden to *de facto* force a renter to act like a real estate attorney skilled in detecting fine-print difficulties and traps?

Most troublesome, isn't it a burden to compel a person to use only certain kinds of income as rent payment and disallow other kinds? A key example is Federal housing vouchers. Asking about or refusing to accept vouchers obviously is a huge burden of prejudice with immense, harsh practical consequences.

The same is true if landlords ask about citizenship or immigration status. If landlords are to be empowered by the City to be *de facto* immigration officers, why not be evenhanded and also empower landlords to be IRS agents or DEA agents? All of those roles are intrusions into a person's private life. Such intrusions have zero relevance to “will she or he pay the rent and keep the place up?”.

Adopting the proposed ordinance will help lift such burdens from renters. The ordinance will reduce the enormous imbalance of power under which renters live. Please test the predictable complaints about landlord “burdens” with skepticism sharpened by recognition of the real, grinding burdens of ordinary renters.

Sincerely,



Samuel B. Trickey
For identification:

Professor (emeritus) Physics and Chemistry, Univ. of Florida
Past President, National Farm Worker Ministry
Co-founder, Welcoming Gainesville and Alachua County
Co-founder, Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs (ACORN)