The evacuation of Yale Park happened because of grossly substandard living conditions, as reflected by the nearly 2000 code violations uncovered after inspections. Yale Park was the inevitable result of a complaint-based system that causes inspectors to wear blinders, and only look at units in which tenants filed a formal complaint. It was MOPOA’s lawsuit against the city that put this ineffective enforcement system in place.

OTOC was not involved in the evacuation. We agree with the city’s statement in September that it was a humanitarian effort to get people out of grossly unsafe living conditions. It was a coordinated effort led by the Planning Department, Fire Department, the mayor - and also the Omaha Public Schools and Heartland Family Services.

OTOC has raised the issue of substandard rental property with the city Planning Department since 2016. In 2017 we asked candidates for City Council to learn about proactive rental inspections as a national best practice to these serious problems. Tuesday the Omaha City Council will be holding a public hearing on the three ordinances. We want to congratulate the mayor and the city council for taking the issue of substandard rental property seriously, and for introducing these ordinances. This is a serious problem and we need an in depth discussion to find the best elements of these proposals and merge them into the best path forward. The health and lives of real people are at stake. Now is not the time for conspiracy theories, but for solutions.

Whatever ordinance is ultimately passed by the city council and signed by the mayor, it will mark a new beginning and it will take collaboration between the city and the community to make it work. Social service agencies, city code enforcement, other government agencies, and tenant support organizations are willing to collaborate to help make this work. We also need the landlords. We encourage the responsible landlords, who are the vast majority, to join in this collaborative effort to insure safe and health rental properties for all Omaha tenants.

This OWH article was used in preparation of this response

<https://www.omaha.com/news/metro/north-omaha/squalid-omaha-apartments-housing-refugees-targeted-by-city-operation-in/article_16ade999-fd00-58d4-9313-274cbaa11128.html>