

Tuesday, January 8th, 2018

My name is Hannah Wyble and I am with the organization, Restoring Dignity. We have been extensively involved with the Yale Park families that were displaced from their homes on September 20th. Since that time, we have been in close contact with all of the families, and have arranged for 97 churches and organizations to sponsor and bring families the items they need in their new homes. The reason I am here speaking with you today is because I am concerned that the city is considering spending a quarter of a million dollars towards funding a housing project that will be owned and managed by Dave Paladino. My reasons for concern are the following.

Since 2012, I have been inside many of Dave Paladino's apartments, as I extensively volunteered to help provide refugees with essential home items that they needed. Since that time, I have observed dozens upon dozens of units that had significant cockroach, bedbug, mouse, and rat infestations. I have seen entire buildings where none of the hallways have any inside lighting that is working. People coming home from work at night have had to use flashlights to navigate to their apartment. I have seen plumbing issues that are so bad that all of the sinks and the bathtub in the apartment were filled with dirty water and would not drain. I have seen dead rats in apartment laundry rooms and have observed furnaces with no air filters. I have also listened as family after family told me that they submitted maintenance requests, some even brought interpreters down to the main office to help them communicate their concerns, and yet repairs were extremely slow to happen or never did.

So when I watched as the Yale Park families moved into many of the Paladino units, I wondered if issues like the ones I had seen in the past would come up. The answer is yes, they did. Of the nearly 100 Yale Park families, 37 reached out to us for help in getting issues in their new homes fixed. Of these 37 families, 22 live in Paladino units. Of the 22 Paladino units, the following issues were found upon move-in: 3 of the 22 had had major electrical issues, 3 of the 22 had mold, 11 of the 22 (50%) were infested with cockroaches, 5 of the 22 were infested with bedbugs, 10 of the 22 (45%) were infested with mice, 8 of the 22 had water leaks or plumbing issues that negatively impacted sanitation, 4 of the 22 had major appliance issues that negatively impacted sanitary cooking and food storage, 4 had fire safety issues such as broken smoke detectors, and 4 of the 22 had issues with their heating and cooling systems.

These issues were all present upon move-in, meaning that the Yale Park families moved into units that had code violations that were already present. 52 code violations, to be exact. Housing issues for the remaining 63 families remain unknown at this point, but will be known soon, as we are beginning comprehensive housing quality assessments this week for all of the Yale Park families.

And these are only 22 families who reached out to us. How many other families are suffering in similar conditions as these, but do not know who to reach out to or how to get help?

While I wish I could say that my concerns stop here, they do not. Last month, a young refugee woman brought a letter to me from Paladino's office. She was distraught because she was being charged \$2,000 in move-out fees for "damages to her apartment." We went down and spoke with the staff at Paladino's office, reviewed pictures, and were able to get her bill brought down to \$45, since the vast majority of the charges were unsubstantiated. While she is happy that her bill dropped almost \$2,000, she is upset because her credit dropped over 100 points, since the bill was sent to collections. Just this morning, I received another letter from a young refugee couple who are being charged almost \$1,000 for move-out damages.

Beyond my own observations, in 2018, it was reported to the Omaha Refugee Task Force Housing Sub Committee that the apartments off of 44th and Cuming street, which are owned by Mr. Paladino, were completely infested with cockroaches and mice. One blind refugee tenant reported not being able to sleep at night, due to the mice and cockroaches that could be heard running over the wood floors.

In conclusion, if the city of Omaha provides Dave Paladino with TIF funding for a new housing development, there are certain requirements that should absolutely be mandated. Number one, the city of Omaha should randomly inspect Paladino's current units, to make sure that he is keeping them up to code and in good working order. If his current units check out, then and only then, should TIF funding be provided. How a landlord maintains his current properties is a strong indicator of how he will maintain his future properties. Taxpayers should not be footing the bill for ill-maintained apartment buildings.

Sincerely,

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