

Quality of Life Fast Facts

Residents across Polk County are living in unsafe housing conditions, like mold, pests, and holes in their ceilings and floors. When people do find affordable housing it is often unsafe for them to report these conditions for fear of retaliation from their landlords.

Basic information

Over the past few years, we've heard stories of people struggling in their living conditions, in addition to not being able to afford housing: Families with roofs that leak. Households with mold. Pests that come up through the floor.

Our justice ministry network decided to take up these issues under the umbrella of Quality of Life.



Important Facts

1.

On average, 1 out of every 5 code violations in Lakeland are for unsafe housing each year. We know the numbers are underreported. Why? According to our Polk County Code Enforcement office, people are afraid to report their landlords for fear of retaliation. Since the pandemic, reporting for unsafe housing has been cut in half.

2.

Last year, a Senate bill was passed that requires every code enforcement report to include the name and address of the person who reports and makes that information public record. That means that if you are living with mold, leaks, or other unsafe conditions and report it, your name and where you live is put out publicly for anyone to see, including your own landlord. The threat of retaliation and loss of housing means that tenants are under-reporting these conditions

3.

Although it is illegal for a landlord to retaliate against their tenant, the only legal measure a tenant can take is to press charges against them, many times after they have been made homeless.

Our Solution

We are still working on gathering more information on this issue, but the steering committee is leaning towards quality of housing as our focus for the Action. We will present our solution at the Rally on March 7th at 6:30 PM at Hurst Chapel.

The Challenge

Tenants have very little power and feel unsafe reporting their landlords for unsafe living conditions. Meanwhile, there is little legal protection from the Housing Authority, the Code Enforcement Office, or other municipal offices for holding "frequent violators" accountable for living conditions in their properties.