

Posted on Fri, May. 21, 2010

Party's over for 8 Temple renters

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Philadelphia Daily News

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The owners of eight rental properties in the North Philadelphia neighborhoods of Jefferson Manor and Yorktown will be ordered today to stop renting to Temple University students.

The city will issue "cease operations" orders against landlords now renting to students in the "North Central Philadelphia Special Controls District." That ordinance says that only property owners living in the dwellings may rent to students.

"Our plan is to enforce the ordinance as it stands today," Bridget Collins-Greenwald, deputy commissioner of Licenses and Inspections, said this week.

She said the department wanted to inspect 17 properties, but could gain entrance to only eight. The department has asked the city's Law Department to seek court orders so L&I can inspect the nine others.

Temple's spring semester ended last week and many students have already moved out for the summer, Temple spokesman Ray Betzner said yesterday.

Property owners and student tenants were notified of the change earlier this month, Collins-Greenwald said.

Roberta Faison, president of the Jefferson Manor Homeowner Associations, praised L&I for finally enforcing the law.

"Anybody still in that area were aware of the situation and they need to adhere to the law," Faison said.

The Yorktown and Jefferson Manor areas were granted a zoning ordinance in 2005 prohibiting "multifamily dwellings, apartment houses, tenement houses, student housing not owner-occupied and fraternity and sorority houses."

The city issued eviction notices in October 2008, but held off on enforcement until the school year ended last May. But the eviction threats led to lawsuits challenging the "special controls" ordinance as unconstitutional.

Richard DeMarco, an attorney for two of the property owners, said his clients had reached a settlement with the city. One client, Michael Parkhill, a New Jersey resident who owned as many as 10 properties, will get to keep three as student rentals because they had been rented to students before the ordinance was adopted. DeMarco said his other client would get to keep one rental property.

The area affected by the ordinance is roughly bounded by Cecil B. Moore Avenue, and 10th, 13th and Master streets.

Andrew Ross, chief deputy city solicitor, said at least one property owner, SHF Properties, is still challenging the ordinance in court. A spokesman for SHF Properties could not be reached for comment yesterday.

"The city argued that the government has the right to restrict the regulations of students and that we can make certain distinctions for students as opposed to others if you can show some kind of detriment or harm to the neighborhood," Ross said yesterday.

He said the special ordinance had been adopted because residents had complained about issues of "health, safety, traffic, noise and partying that college students are going to do."

Betzner said Temple would aid any student who needs housing help, and that the design for a 1,700-bed dormitory that will relieve some of the needs for off-campus housing is being completed.