

Seattle Rental Housing Study

Seattle City Council briefing
June 2018

BE BOUNDLESS

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Overview of the project

- Goals
 - Not a formal evaluation
 - Goals:
 - Investigate practices of, and challenges for, renters and landlords, and perceptions of recent ordinances
 - Develop baseline data, tools, and collaborations for understanding distribution, condition, cost, and change in rental housing
 - Establish infrastructure for future evaluations

Overview of the project

- Components / methods
 1. Qualitative analyses – focus groups / interviews with renters
 2. Survey of Seattle landlords
 3. New data sources (scraping)
 4. Development of collaborative consortia

Component 1:

Qualitative analyses – focus groups / interviews

Purpose: Collect new data on the practices and experiences of renters within this Seattle housing market.

Scope:

- 46 recent movers in 5 focus groups + 2 individual interviews
 - Representatives from tenant advocacy groups
 - Housing Authority clients
 - Neighborhood groups
 - Voucher recipients
 - Native Spanish speakers
- 2 additional interviews for tenants with disAbility

Component 1:

Qualitative analyses – focus groups / interviews

Key findings:

- Significant barriers to housing access
 - Cost/affordability
 - Lack of transparency in application/leasing process
 - Discrimination
- Voucher recipients express especially high vulnerability
- Almost no familiarity with existence, intent, or operation of ordinances
- General skepticism about effectiveness of ordinances

Component 2: Survey of Seattle landlords

Purpose: Collect new data on the practices and experiences of property owners and managers in the Seattle housing market

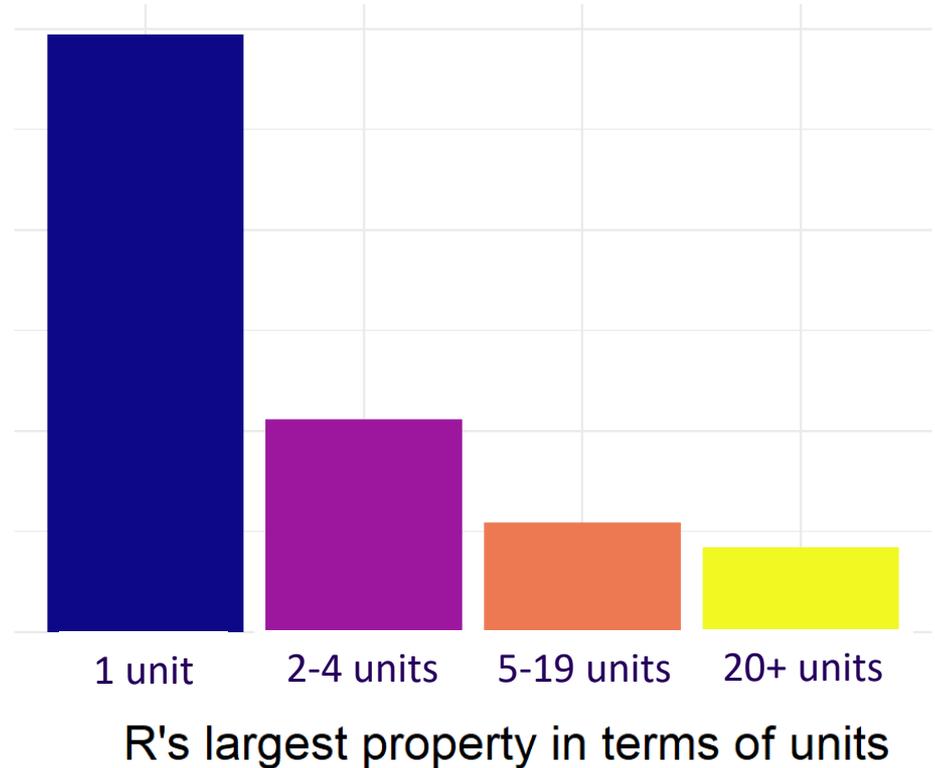
Method:

- Online voluntary survey
- Recruitment through the City of Seattle's Rental Registry and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) lists, membership lists of landlord organizations
- Sample not random, but large (N = 4,391) and diverse

Component 2: Survey of Seattle landlords

Key findings:

- Majority of respondents manage only small buildings
 - 11% manage buildings as large as 5-19 units
 - 8.5% manage buildings with 20 units or more
- But large-building landlords manage around 75% of units represented in the survey



Component 2: Survey of Seattle landlords

Key findings:

- Practices of managers of large buildings, or larger numbers of buildings, differ in important ways from those of managers of smaller numbers of units
 - More recent, larger rent increases
 - More likely to report increasing taxes as reason for rent hikes
 - More likely to have dealt with a recent vacancy
 - More likely to use standard rental criteria and report less flexibility in tenancy criteria

Component 2: Survey of Seattle landlords

Key findings:

- General dissatisfaction with recent ordinances (First-in-Time, limits on move-in fees, limits on criminal record screening)
 - Vast majority say that ordinances will be ineffective
 - Vast majority claim that access will be reduced
 - 1 in 10 report support for interventions related to any of the stated goals of recent ordinances (increasing access, affordability, etc.)
 - 40% have sold, or plan to sell, property in response to City ordinances
 - 89% disagree or strongly disagree with idea that landlord perspectives are considered by policy makers

Component 2: Survey of Seattle landlords

Key findings:

- Significant misinformation about ordinances (open-ended responses)
 - E.g., assumption that First-in-Time ordinance limits ability to set aside units for voucher recipients.
 - E.g., belief that the criminal-records ordinance requires landlords to rent to applicants with criminal records
- Points to potential value of additional outreach, education

Component 3:

New tools for rental-market data collection

Purpose: Develop tools and strategies to track the distribution, condition, cost, and change in rental housing in the Seattle area

Method:

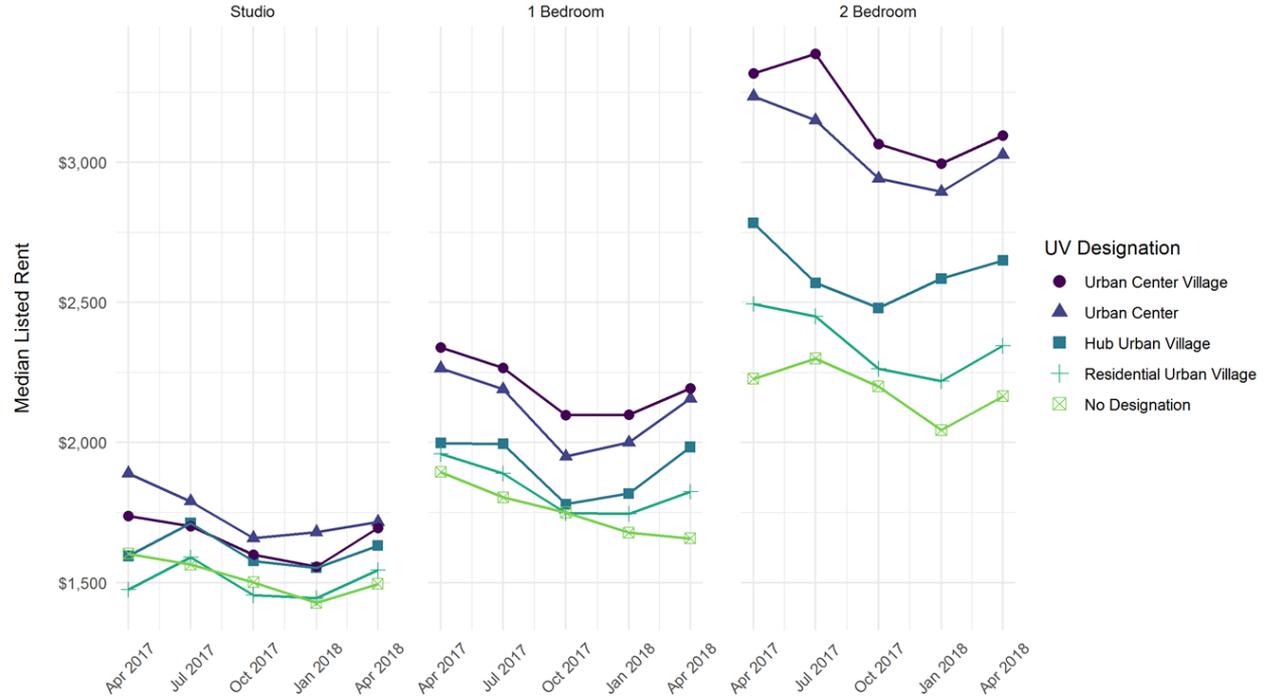
- Developed tool to scrape information from online for-rent advertisements
- Geocoded, attached to parcel data
- Assessed for coverage
- Compared to more traditional sources (American Community Survey, Zillow, Dupre+Scott)

Component 3: New tools

Key findings:

- Scraped data are flexible, low-cost source of information on asking rents and availability
- Complement to, not replacement for, other sources of data

Table 3.1 Trends in median asking rents by village type and size of unit.



Component 4: Development of collaborative consortia

Purpose: Build relationships with community organizations and entities at the University of Washington to enhance data-driven policy relative to rental housing affordability and accessibility.

Key outcomes:

- Relationships with housing and tenant-advocacy groups (Seattle Housing Authority, Casa Latina, Pioneer Human Services, Legal Action Center, etc.)
- Working relationships with real estate entities (Rental Housing Association of Washington, Washington Multi-Family Housing Association, etc.)
- New collaborations between Runstad Department of Real Estate, Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, eScience, etc.

Questions?

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