Seattle Rental Housing Study

Seattle City Council briefing
June 2018

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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 <u>practices and experiences of renters</u> 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

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Component 2:
Survey of Seattle landlords

Purpose: Collect new data on the <u>practices and experiences of property owners and managers</u> 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

| 1 unit | 2-4 units | 5-19 units | 20+ units |

R's largest property in terms of units
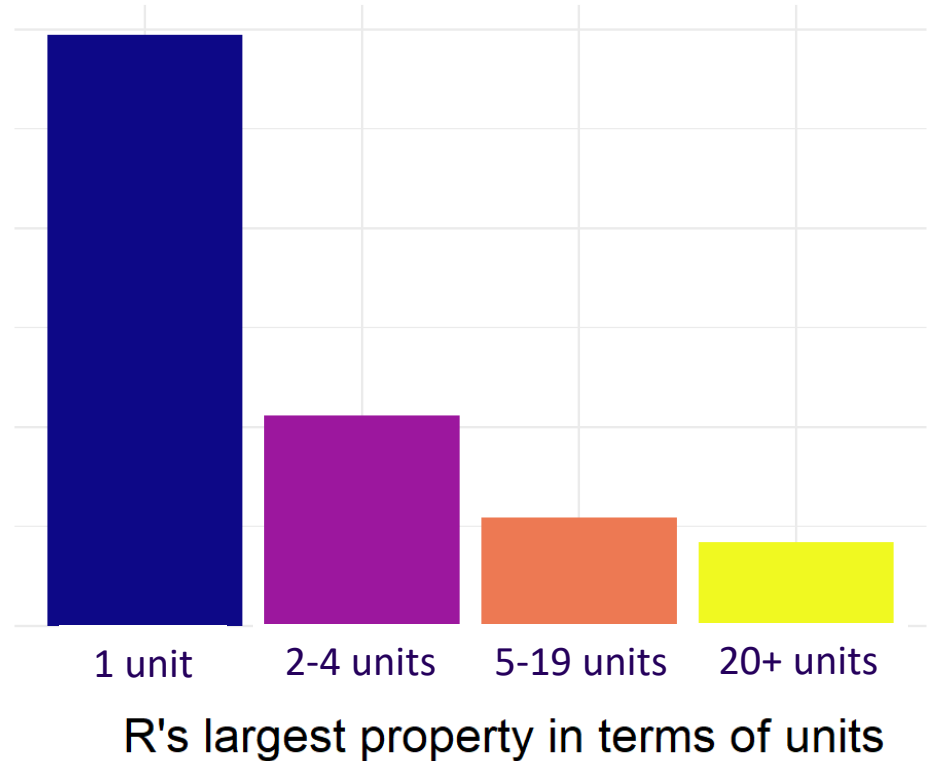
Component 2:
Survey of Seattle landlords

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

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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

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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

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Component 3:
New tools for rental-market data collection

Purpose: Develop tools and strategies to track the <u>distribution, condition, cost, and change in rental housing</u> 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.
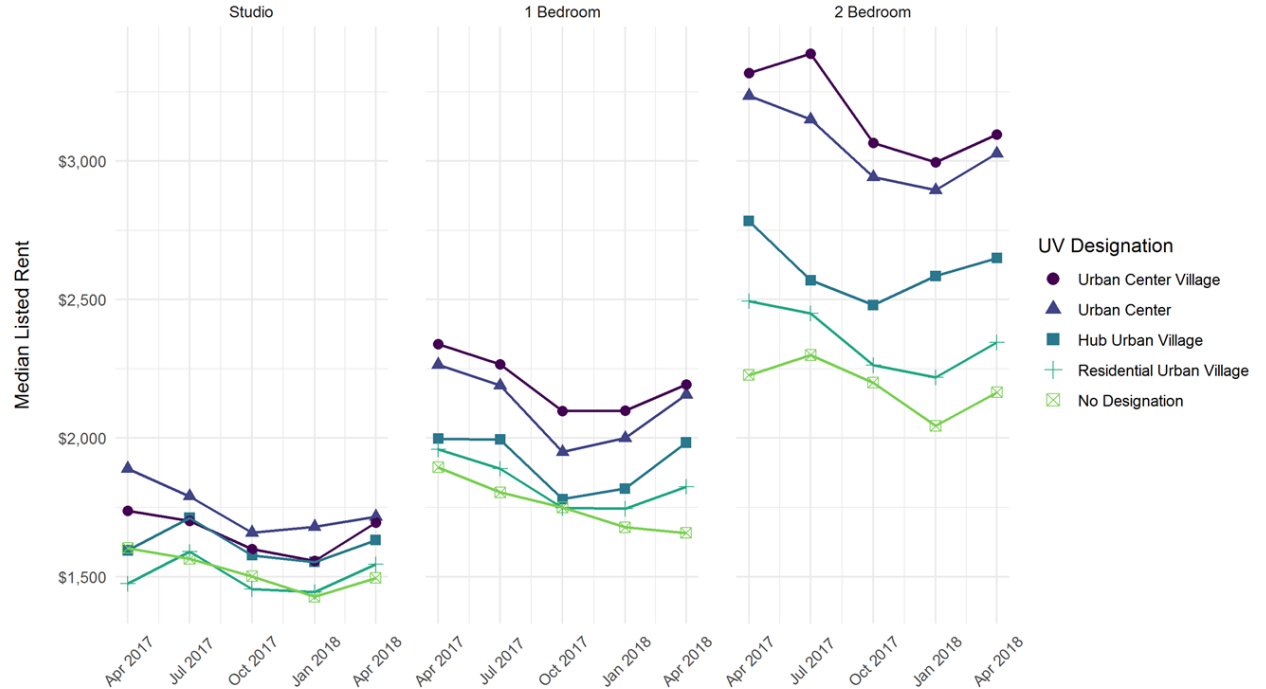
Component 4:
Development of collaborative consortia

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.

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Questions?