

Task Force releases report following Eviction Summit

Community organizations call for solutions

A [report issued today](#) outlined the ways in which Akron should move forward in addressing its eviction crisis.

Court mediation, right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, and landlord-tenant education were among the recommendations listed.

“Our goal is to share what community members want to see happen,” said Steven McGarrity, executive director of Community Legal Aid. “These are the things we heard at the Eviction Summit directly from the community, and these are things we think would go a long way in addressing Akron’s eviction crisis.”

The Eviction Summit was a full-day event in April co-hosted by Legal Aid and Fair Housing Contact Service, who jointly issued the report.

The two organizations said they have held a series of meetings in the months since the Summit, in an effort to find consensus among community leaders on an action plan to combat the city’s moniker as the eviction capital of Ohio.

“We were excited about the momentum at the Summit,” said Lauren Green-Hull, associate director of FHCS. “Our hope was to build on that momentum to share tangible results with the community, things they could expect that local leaders would commit to.”

That, Green-Hull said, hasn’t happened.

“Unfortunately, we’ve hit a bit of a delay,” she said, citing what she called valid concerns over increased violence throughout the city and the need to address the killing of Jayland Walker by Akron police earlier this summer.

Both organizations have been encouraged, however, by the enthusiasm and interest among other community agencies and private organizations.

“Places like PNC bank are coming to the table and saying, ‘How can we help?’” McGarrity said. “We’re having real conversations about getting non-traditional lending products into the hands of low-income families, to help promote homeownership as one way to combat eviction.”

Education and outreach is another strategy the team is pursuing, Green-Hull said.

“We’re moving forward with an outreach and education campaign for landlords and tenants,” she explained. “People still have to be in relationship with one another, and we hope that by encouraging good communication and relationship building, we can help lower Akron’s eviction numbers.”

McGarrity also cited his encouragement at Akron City Council’s continued commitment to working on this issue through their Safe Housing Committee, saying he remains “hopeful about the ongoing efforts.”

But as far as the key strategies identified at the Summit -- providing tenants facing eviction with legal counsel and establishing a mediation program to pre-empt evictions -- no details have been forthcoming.

From McGarrity’s perspective, Legal Aid is committed to continuing to provide free legal help to low-income renters facing eviction.

“Fighting homelessness for Akron residents has been a priority for us for more than 70 years,” McGarrity said. “We’re going to continue doing all we can to keep up that fight.”

Read the full version of the Eviction Summit Report [here](#).

Learn more about the Summit, and watch the footage online, by visiting www.evictionsummit.org.

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