



2026 UPDATE
UNDERSTANDING THE
RENTAL LANDSCAPE:
A PROFILE ANALYSIS OF DETROIT
LANDLORDS



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UNDERSTANDING THE RENTAL LANDSCAPE:

A PROFILE ANALYSIS OF DETROIT LANDLORDS

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INTRODUCTION

The rental market in Detroit presents many challenges, not just for the city's renters, many of whom are low-income, but also for the city's landlords. In a city where just under half of the housing is rental, and just over half of the rental stock is single-family¹, the state of rental housing is critically important for all of the city's residents and the neighborhoods in which they reside. A key feature of the rental system, not only in Detroit but across the country, are the landlords who own the majority of the rental property in the city. These landlords and their large rental portfolios are instrumental in providing housing for nearly half of Detroit's residents.

There is currently a growing interest in rental housing and questions about the ownership of rental properties. It is through an increased understanding of the city's rental system, that there is the opportunity to make progress to improve housing conditions across the city. Understanding the challenges in the system, not only for tenants, but for landlords, is foundational to improving Detroit's rental housing system. To make these improvements, there must be a collaborative approach toward landlords, and an understanding of the critical role that they play in the housing system.



This report builds on earlier work done in Clevelandⁱⁱ and a previous Detroit landlord study by Detroit Future City and Data Driven Detroit (D3)ⁱⁱⁱ, which analyzed 2021 data and identified different types of landlords. This new version updates that analysis using 2025 data and takes a closer look at key landlord characteristics to build a deeper understanding of not only who owns rental property in the city, but also identifying factors that can more accurately identify when a landlord is engaging in predatory behavior.

In addition to the data analysis, this report is informed by conversations with landlords who shared their experience and the challenges operating rental businesses in Detroit. The findings offer important insights to inform rental housing strategies, and this report provides a more nuanced picture of the challenges many landlords—especially smaller ones—face building their rental businesses in an increasingly complex market. This deeper understanding of not only who owns rental property in the city but also highlighting the challenges that they are facing should be used to better inform housing policy and work toward building a better rental system in the city.

Top insights

Using updated data from 2025, this version of the landlord analysis points to several key findings about Detroit's rental landscape:

Detroit continues to have a large number of landlords, and we have identified an additional 12,000 since 2021

There are currently 54,365 unique landlords, and there were 12,000 more landlords identified than in the 2021 analysis.

Most landlords own one or two properties

Ninety-three percent, or 50,535, of Detroit's landlords own one or two properties.

Lots of local ownership

Similar to the 2021 analysis, 65% of Detroit's landlords have a Detroit address.

Most landlords show no or only a few indicators of negative landlord behavior

Sixty-two percent of Detroit's landlords show no indicators often associated with bad actor landlords or property speculators, and 26% have only one.

Detroit's landlords continue to face many challenges

Detroit's landlords report continued challenges navigating government processes, challenges with tenants (most notably non-payment of rent), and an elongated eviction process, along with difficulties financing property renovations and maintenance.



Building landlord profiles

Building on the original analysis, which was modeled after similar research from Cleveland, it again uses data from Data Driven Detroit’s Integrated Property Data System to identify and classify landlords in the city of Detroit. In this updated version, the goal was not only to identify the different types of landlords in the city, but to also provide a more detailed look at their characteristics. This deeper analysis includes examining factors—such as owner location, evictions, and blight violations—to begin to identify the difference between landlords who tend to operate responsibly and those whose behavior raises concerns.

Alongside the updated data and expanded quantitative analysis, DFC’s Center for Equity, Engagement, and Research conducted a series of focus groups with small landlords to better understand their experiences and the challenges they face.

Through the combination of the deeper quantitative analysis, landlord identification, and the qualitative insights from the focus groups, this report provides insights that can be used to craft policy and programs to support both landlords and their tenants and improve the quality of rental housing in the city.



THE LANDLORD LANDSCAPE

Using a similar process as in the previous analysis, the first step in updating the landlord universe is to identify the number of residential parcels in the city and the number of those that are used for rental housing.

The universe of residential parcels

Each year, the number of parcels within the city of Detroit changes, as parcels are combined or split as part of the natural course of development and redevelopment. In 2025, there were 379,466 parcels in the city. Of these, roughly half, or 193,091, are estimated to be residential. This represents a small loss of 1,799 parcels in the total parcel universe and an increase of 2,027 residential parcels since the previous analysis in 2021.

The rental universe

After identifying the overall residential parcel universe, the next step was to use a series of indicators to determine whether or not the property was likely a rental property. These are the same as the previous study and include:

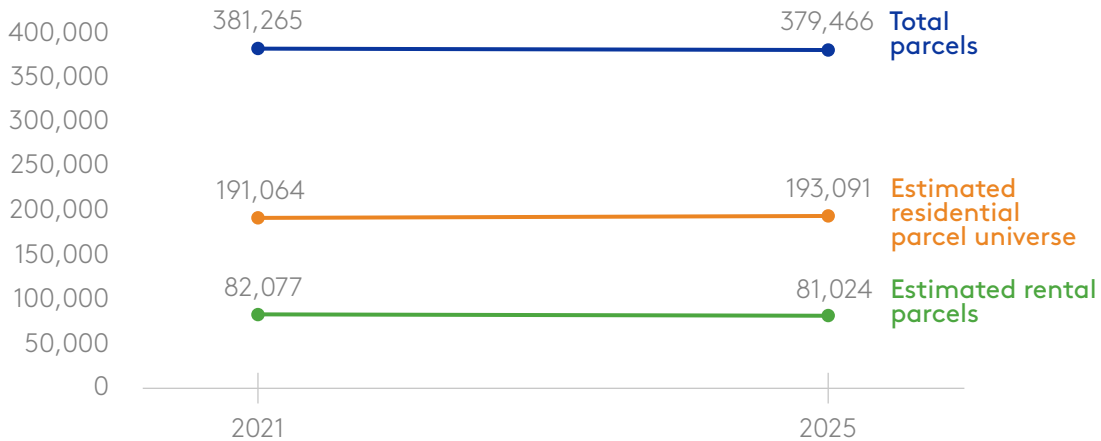
- *Being in the city's rental registration system.*
- *Having rental-related blight ticket in the past three years.*
- *Having the taxpayer at a different address*
- *The taxpayer being a corporate entity (LLC or Inc.)*
- *Not having a principal residence exemption*
- *Having an eviction*

Though the overall factors remained the same, there were changes in the datasets and how they were considered. The most prominent were the number of evictions increasing due to a larger dataset to draw on, limiting blight violations in the past three years, and limiting partial principal residence exemptions due to concerns about the quality of city data.

Through this analysis, there were 81,024 parcels identified as being rentals. This marked a decrease of just over 1,000 parcels from the 2021 analysis.

There were fewer rental parcels in 2025 than 2021

Rental estimates in Detroit, 2025



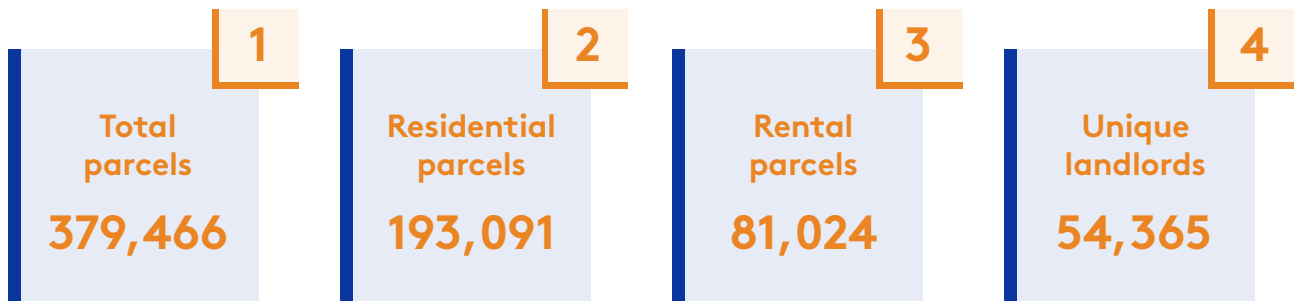
Source: Data Driven Detroit



Identifying the city's landlords

Next, data from the city's parcel file and Property Praxis¹ were used to identify the number of unique landlords in Detroit. A fuzzy matching process was used to account for any errors in the data inputs.

From that process, there were 54,365 unique landlords identified. This marks a notable increase in the number of landlords that were able to be identified, with this version of the analysis identifying 12,000 more landlords in the city than four years ago.



¹ Property Praxis is a dataset that examines LLC and corporate ownership to deepen the understanding of who owns multiple properties in the city by identifying the corporate owners and connecting them to the corporate entities that they own.

Classifying the city's landlords

To gain a better understanding of the city's landlords and their characteristics, they have been classified into different groups based on a number of attributes. As with the 2021 analysis, this was done through a statistical process called Latent Class Analysis, which identifies groups based on characteristics of multiple data points. The variables that were included in that analysis are:

- *Number of properties owned*
- *Corporate ownership*
- *Assessed value of the property*
- *Landlord having an address outside of the city*
- *Having been cited for a blight violation*
- *Being in the city's rental system*
- *Recent property acquisitions*

Through this process, the landlords were classified into the same four groups identified in the previous analysis. Those groups were primarily built around the number of properties owned by each landlord, with that being the major distinguishing factor between categories.

General characteristics of the typologies

Type 1	Own 1-2 properties, show limited indicators of professionalization ²
Type 2	Own 1-2 properties, show indicators of professionalization ³
Type 3	Own 3-4 properties
Type 4	Own 5 or more properties

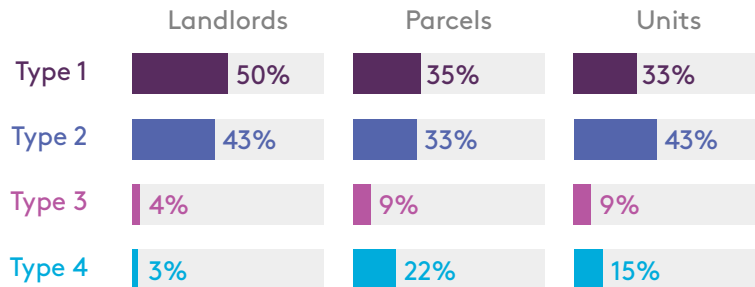
² This report loosely defines professionalization, or in this case, limited professionalization, as landlords not well integrated into the City's rental system, and has a lower prevalence of corporate ownership.

³ In identifying the number of landlords that exist within the city of Detroit, the number of LLCs and other corporate entities remains a challenge. Though the project team was able to leverage data from Property Praxis, linking corporate entities to individual owners, especially for small owners, warrants further examination.

A substantial number of landlords are small and fall into the first two types, on account of owning only one or two properties. There are currently 27,097 Type 1 landlords and 23,438 Type 2. Together, these groups make up 93% of the city’s landlords. The remaining 7% consists of 2,400 Type 3 landlords and 1,500 Type 4 landlords.

Smaller Type 1 and Type 2 landlords represent the majority of the rental market

Share of typologies in Detroit, 2025

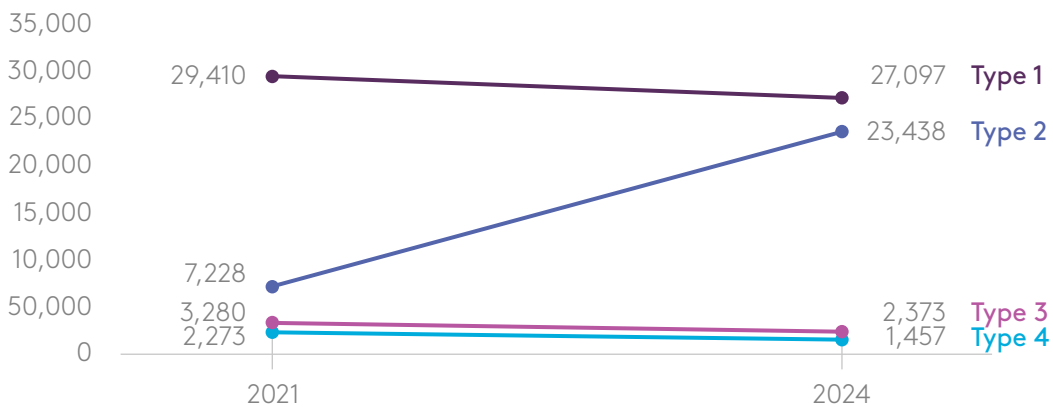


Source: Data Driven Detroit

Since the analysis of 2021 landlord data, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Type 2 landlords identified.⁴ This group has seen the largest change of any of the groups, increasing by 224%, or by more than 16,000 landlords.

There was an increase in Type 2 landlords

Detroit landlords by type, 2021-24



Source: Data Driven Detroit

There was also a notable decline in the number of large landlords identified, with the number of Type 3 landlords identified declining by 27% and the number of Type 4 landlords identified declining by 35%. This was also true for the number of Type 1 landlords identified, which declined by 7%.

⁴ Due to improvements in automated matching processes since the prior analysis, we were able to use a more stringent threshold for identifying whether two landlords with a similar name or address were likely the same entity. This led to an increase in the number of Type 2 landlords, but without comparing all owners across both analyses, as well as a deeper dive into individual LLC management companies, we cannot confirm whether the increase in Type 2 landlords was due to changes in the landlord landscape or improvements in the study methodology.



Type 1

27,097 landlords

28,593 parcels

61,749 units

Type 1 landlords remained the largest group of landlords in the city. This group showed limited signs of professionalization and connection with the formal rental system. Sometimes referred to as “Mom and Pop” landlords, only 5% of Type 1 landlords used corporate ownership, and less than 2% were in the city’s rental system. As a group, two-thirds of these landlords had only single-family houses in their portfolios.

Type 2

23,438 landlords

26,611 parcels

80,349 units

Similar to Type 1 landlords, Type 2 landlords own only one or two properties. However, this group had a higher level of professionalization⁵: 44% had corporate ownership and more than half were registered in the city’s formal rental system. Of all the landlord types, Type 2 were the most likely to own only single-family houses, which was the case for nearly 80% of Type 2 landlords.

Type 3

2,373 landlords

7,671 parcels

16,798 units

Type 3 landlords own a relatively small number of units in the city. Landlords in this group own three or four parcels, and 39% of this group owns multifamily buildings. When compared to the smaller landlords, Type 3 are more likely to be engaged with the rental system and have corporate ownership.

Type 4

1,457 landlords

18,124 parcels

28,999 units

Type 4 are the city’s largest landlords in terms of units, owning five or more properties. This group, while small in number, owns almost 29,000 units, or 15% of the rental stock in the city. Like Type 3 landlords, this group is much more likely to be professionalized and engaged with the city’s rental system. Type 4 landlords are also the most likely to own multifamily properties, with 57% owning multifamily.

⁵ Among the limitations in the data is the lack of a clear understanding of corporate owners, and which individual is the owner of each corporate entity. The Property Praxis data do address this for some properties, but not all. For this reason, this group may contain some landlords under Type 4.



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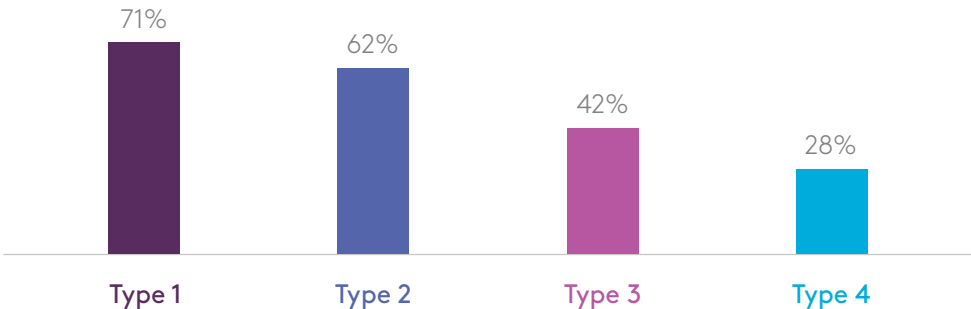


THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LANDLORDS IN DETROIT

Local ownership

Among the city’s landlords, there is a substantial amount of local ownership. Across the universe of landlords, 65% have a Detroit address. This is even more pronounced for landlords owning one or two properties. Among Type 1 landlords, 71% have a Detroit address, as do 62% of Type 2 landlords. Across these two groups, there are 33,700 or two-thirds of landlords who appear to be local.

Small landlords are more likely to have a Detroit address
Share of landlords with a Detroit address, by type, Detroit, 2024

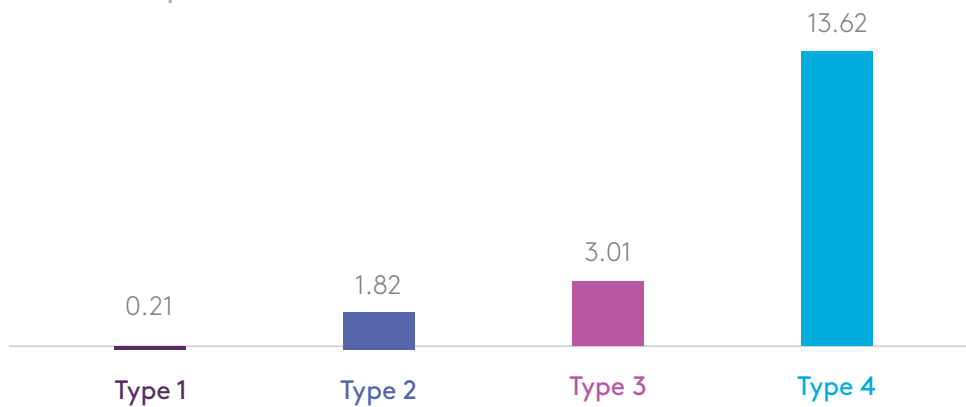


Source: Data Driven Detroit

Evictions

A major challenge in the rental system is eviction. Every year in Detroit, there are more than 20,000 eviction cases filed.⁶ This report examined the period between 2019 and 2022, where there were approximately 75,000 eviction cases filed. The eviction rate and amount of evictions varies by landlord type. Type 1 landlords are far less likely to evict tenants, and this group filed 5,669 eviction cases, or .21 per landlord. This contrasts with Type 4 landlords, who filed nearly 20,000 cases over the same period, which is a rate of 13.62 per landlord. This is not to say that small landlords do not file eviction cases; Type 2 landlords filed more than 42,000, but the groups with more properties filed cases at a much higher rate than those that owned just one or two properties.

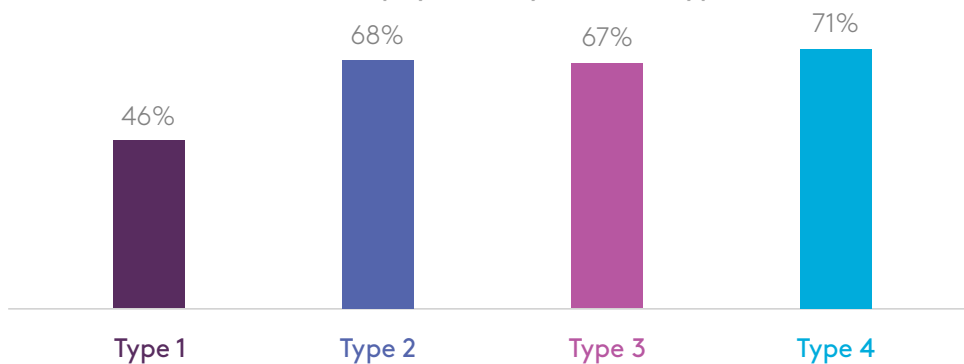
Large landlords file evictions at a higher rate than their counterparts
Eviction cases per landlord in Detroit, 2019-22



Source: Data Driven Detroit

Of these cases, the most common reason for filing an eviction was for non-payment of rent, with nearly two-thirds of cases overall being filed for non-payment. This was consistent across landlord types with each group, except for Type 1, where just over two-thirds of their eviction cases were filed for non-payment.

Non-payment is the leading cause of eviction
Share of eviction cases for non-payment by landlord type in Detroit, 2019-22



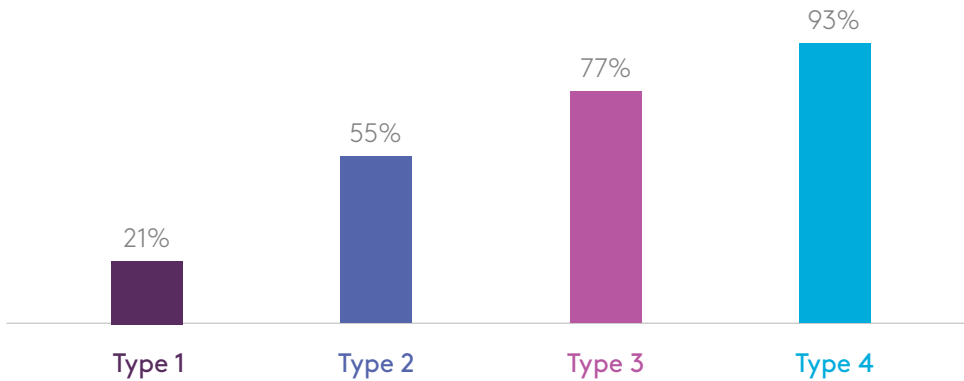
Source: Data Driven Detroit

⁶ This only captures formal evictions filed with the 36th District Court. Due to their nature, we are unable to capture informal evictions or “cash for keys” arrangements made between landlord and tenants.

Blight violations

One of the factors included in the classification of landlords was the number of recent blight violations each landlord has received. Of the city's 54,365 landlords, 21,800—or 40%—have received a blight violation in the last three years. In raw numbers, Type 2 is the group with the largest number of landlords receiving a recent blight violation. However, this accounts for 55% of Type 2 landlords. Type 3 and 4 landlords are much more likely to have received a blight violation, with 77% of Type 3 landlords and 93% of Type 4 landlords having at least one.

Type 4 landlords are much more likely to have received a blight violation
Share of landlords with a recent blight violation in Detroit, 2023-25



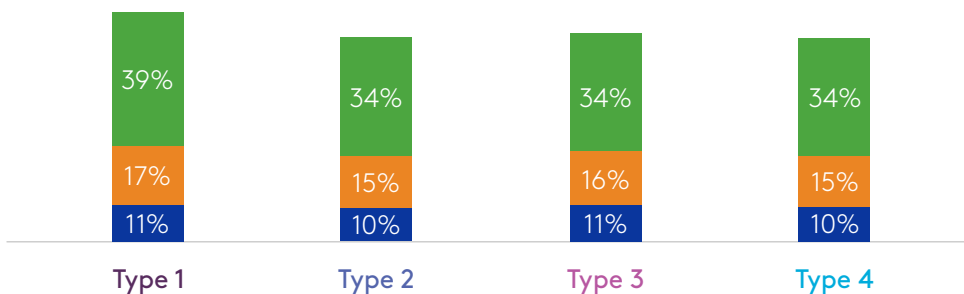
Source: Data Driven Detroit

The reason for blight violations is consistent across the typologies of landlords. The largest reason for receiving a blight violation, across all groups, was non-compliance with the City's rental-registration ordinance. This accounted for about 34% of violations for Type 2, 3, and 4 landlords and 38% of violations for Type 1 landlords. This was followed by solid waste, or the failure to keep the property free of garbage, with 15% for Type 2, 3, and 4, and 17% for Type 1. The third most common reason for blight violations was exterior blight, which was approximately 10% of violations for each group.

Non-compliance with the city's rental ordinance is the top reason for receiving a blight violation

Top blight violations by landlord type in Detroit, 2023-25

■ Exterior blight ■ Solid waste ■ Rental ordinance non-compliance



Source: Data Driven Detroit



HEARING FROM DETROIT'S SMALL LANDLORDS

To deepen the understanding of landlords' experiences in Detroit's rental landscape, Detroit Future City convened a series of focus groups with Detroit's small landlords, Type 1 and Type 2. Though each landlord of this type only owns 1 or 2 properties, as a whole they collectively own about three-quarters of the rental units in the city. These focus groups were designed to better understand their experiences and uncover any challenges that they are facing.

Most landlords who participated would generally be classified as Type 1 or Type 2—those only owning a few properties—although there were a few that owned more. The landlords in the group owned property across the city, representing rental units on the east side, west side, and in Midtown. Their units spanned a wide range of price points, from some of the most expensive rentals in the city, to some of the least.

Of the landlords who participated, there was a range of opinions on why they first became a landlord. For some, there was an opportunity to provide quality housing for Detroit residents and benefit from the city's revitalization. Others saw rental property as a longer-term opportunity to build wealth. There were also landlords who simply had inherited properties and decided to renovate and rent them out.

There was also a range of challenges that were frequently mentioned by the landlords in the group. These included challenges working with the City of Detroit, negative experiences with tenants, and the financial challenges of renting property in Detroit.

Landlord-City dynamics

Landlords expressed a range of opinions on their dealings with the City of Detroit. These ranged from inspections to navigating the process of properly registering their rental properties. Though these experiences were not universally negative, a number of landlords that were interviewed raised many negative experiences they had as part of the rental registration process, including inconsistent inspections and difficulty working with City staff to navigate the process. One participant noted an example where one inspector would find an item in compliance and a second inspector would find it out of compliance.

There was also a common theme where the landlords noted that their interactions with the City felt adversarial, and many noted that it often felt as if the City was being punitive toward landlords. As one landlord noted, these landlords are also small-business owners, and though there are many programs to promote and assist small-business owners, there is a different, more punitive approach toward landlords. They would appreciate a supportive approach for small landlords that is more aligned with how other small businesses are supported in Detroit. Many landlords expressed wanting a more collaborative relationship with the City in which they could work collaboratively to jointly improve the City's rental housing stock.

Experiences with tenants

One common theme that was almost universal among landlords that participated in the focus groups was challenges with tenants and the difficulty with the evictions process, which can stretch out for months. The landlords noted that with the right-to-council, which was passed in 2022, the process for evictions has lengthened, even when the eviction is for non-payment of rent. With an eviction process that can frequently take more than six months, this represents a substantial loss of income for landlords who are operating on slim margins and typically do not receive rent payments or the back rent that the tenant owes for this time. Almost every landlord had a similar story, and several noted tenants who were proficient in how the system currently works and how they could use the system to stay in the rental unit for an extended period of time without paying rent. As a result, there were several landlords who noted that when they first started renting out units, they were initially lenient with tenant screening and understanding of late payments, but have over time become more stringent on both accounts.

Financial pressures

One major issue that was identified by landlords was the difficulty with funding and financing the renovation and maintenance of their properties. Nearly all of the focus group participants noted the relatively low rents that they could charge, limits the income available to cover renovations to their units or maintenance, which is a common need given the state of the housing stock in the city.

There was also frequent mention of property taxes as a challenge for landlords. The city is well known for its high property tax rates, and depending on the location in the city, and for some landlords, the tax bill could be substantial. Landlords also noted that they faced an increased property tax bill after doing renovations on their properties. Like many expenses included in running a rental property, landlords noted that this was often passed on to renters as part of their rent.

However, many of the landlords noted that they were challenged by only making a small margin on their properties. However, they understood that the benefits of being a landlord were not short term but would accrue over time. Though there was a need in the short term for the property to cover day-to-day expenses, most understood that they would recoup their investments over time.



Note: Detroit Future City conducted focus groups in October 2025. Over the course of 4 focus groups, DFC received input from 13 landlords.

LANDLORD PRACTICES

One perennial question and challenge related to the city’s landlords is how to identify landlords that are good actors who are trying to make their rental business work in a challenging environment, and the bad actors, or speculators who have built a business model on exploiting the bottom end of the housing market.

To gain greater insights beyond a basic classification of landlords, the project team examined a number of factors that could indicate when a landlord might be engaging in predatory behavior and identified several factors that are often associated with bad actor landlords or property speculators. These indicators take a closer look at things like recent blight violations and evictions and narrow the indicators down to those that would be the responsibility of the landlord.

As part of this, there were seven factors that were identified and each landlord was flagged for having any of the following:

- *Being an out-of-state owner*
- *Having a long-term vacancy without an associated building permit*
- *Having five or more action-related blight violations⁷ in the last three years*
- *Having one or more property-related blight violations⁸ in last three years*
- *Landlord has at least two or more eviction cases with representation that were dismissed*
- *Landlord has filed two or more eviction cases for termination⁹*
- *Landlord where the majority (>50%) of their eviction filings were for termination*

Sixty-two percent of landlords did not have any predatory indicators

Share of landlords with predatory indicators in Detroit, 2023-25

	No indicators	1 indicator	2 indicator	3 or more indicators
Type 1	77 %	20 %	3 %	0 %
Type 2	51 %	32 %	11 %	5 %
Type 3	29 %	30 %	20 %	21 %
Type 4	15 %	18 %	19 %	48 %
Total	62 %	26 %	8 %	8 %

⁷ Action-related blight violations are those that are the result of administrative/compliance failures on the part of the landlord. Examples of this type of violation are a missing lead clearance, or failure to get a certificate of compliance.

⁸ Property-related blight violations deal with the buildings' physical structure. Examples include broken windows, defective porches, and lack of heat.

⁹ Termination of tenancy can occur after 30 days’ notice at the end of a lease, for a month-to-month lease or if the tenant has violated the terms of the lease.



Overall, the majority of Detroit’s landlords did not have any of the indicators selected for this analysis, with 33,600 or 62% of overall. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there were nearly 2,400 landlords who had three or more indicators and just 450 that had five or more.

When looking at this by landlord type, Type 1 landlords are the least likely to exhibit negative landlord behavior, with 97% having one or fewer indicators. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Type 4 landlords were the most likely to exhibit negative behaviors, with nearly half having three or more indicators.

Being able to identify the landlords who are, and are not, exhibiting negative behaviors is an important step toward better monitoring and regulating the rental housing stock in the city. Over the long-term, monitoring these factors could help the City more easily address the issues of landlord compliance while also taking a more supportive stance toward landlords who are not engaging in negative practices.



KEY THEMES

This look into the landscape of Detroit’s landlords again illuminates a deeper understanding of Detroit’s rental housing market. This understanding should be used to reframe conversations on how to improve rental housing conditions in Detroit.

To build the foundation for a better rental housing system in the city, the most important findings are:

Most landlords own one or two properties

Of the city’s 54,365 landlords, 93% own one or two properties. These landlords, sometimes referred to as “Mom and Pop” landlords, make up the backbone of the rental stock in Detroit. These are not just landlords but people working to run a small rental housing business, and they could benefit from the supports and assistance that is available for other types of small businesses in the city. They account for more than 140,000 units, which is three-quarters of the rental units in the city. As there continues to be updates to the rental housing policy, programs, and regulations in the city, the number of small landlords, and the number of units that they control, continues to be one of the most important facts to consider.

There continues to be lots of local landlords

Even with the growth in the total number of landlords in the city, the amount of local ownership has remained similar, with 65% of landlords having a Detroit address. This is especially true for Type 1 and Type 2 landlords, which represents 68% local ownership. With the large number of small local landlords, there is the opportunity to provide supports to build wealth within the community. Like the many programs that have been available to fund repairs for the city’s homeowners, similar programs focused on improving the condition of rental housing in the city can have the dual benefit of not only improving living conditions for Detroit’s renters, but also serve as an opportunity to build wealth in the community.

The need to improve landlord-City interactions

To improve the rental system overall, the City should continue to take a more collaborative approach with landlords, especially the city's new and small landlords. Many of the landlords who participated in focus groups for this project have experienced challenges working with the City in the past and have had adversarial experiences. To address this challenge, the City should continue to work toward building a collaborative relationship with landlords. One way that could occur is by treating the city's landlords as the small businesses that they are, and taking a more supportive stance toward landlords, especially those that show limited signs of negative behavior.

Though the need for financial resources, such as grants, to assist in bringing units into compliance was frequently mentioned, there are other ways that this could manifest. In addition to financial resources, there could be City staff dedicated to assisting landlords navigate City processes, such as acquiring building permits or assisting with the rental registration process. They could also help identify any resources that the landlord might be eligible for. It is through the building of a cooperative relationship between the city and landlords that there can be positive improvements in the rental system. The City has taken some steps in this area as it revised its rental compliance ordinance in 2024 and continues to work to identify improvements.

Landlords face financial pressure

When talking to landlords, many noted the financial challenges to operating a rental business in the city, and the small margins that are common among landlords, especially given the relatively low amounts of rent most properties in Detroit command. This was notable among small landlords, who understood the long-term benefits of owning rental property, but faced real challenges meeting the day-to-day expenses such as renovations, maintenance and taxes.

With the passing of right-to-council in 2022, which helps Detroit's low-income tenants through the eviction process, one of the unintended consequences has been the additional financial pressures put on landlords. In Detroit, two-thirds of eviction cases were filed for non-payment of rent and as a result of right-to-council the eviction process has lengthened. This has extended the amount of time that landlords are not receiving any rent payments for their properties, increasing the financial pressure on an already strained system, and limiting the rental income that can be used to maintain their properties.

There should be steps to alleviate the financial stresses on landlords to build a better housing system. With the nature of the rental system and the number of low-income renters in the city, the financial challenges are substantial. There needs to be better supports for both landlords and tenants through the eviction process to minimize the negative effects that eviction has on both landlords and tenants to ensure the long-term stability of the rental system.



CONCLUSION

Building off of previous work, this report provides an updated look at the landscape of Detroit's 54,000 landlords. This information is of critical importance, as it not only provides data insights on the rental housing system, but also the experiences and challenges of landlords renting properties in the city. This information should be used to improve the rental housing programs and policies.

The analysis reveals that the rental housing system in Detroit is full of small landlords, many of whom are located within the city. These are landlords who are working in a difficult environment and face a number of challenges. To build a better rental housing system in the city, there is the opportunity to take a more collaborative approach to landlords and begin to view them as small-business owners, who, like many small-businesses owners, need support. It is through understanding the critical role that landlords play in the housing system, that work toward building a better housing system that works for landlords and their tenants can begin.

ENDNOTES

- i U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 1-year estimates 2024
- ii Coulton, C., Urban, A., Richter, F. G., Henderson, M. H., Schramm, M., Jeon, J., & Fischer, R. (2020, September). Characteristics of Rental Properties and Landlords in Cleveland: Implications for Achieving Lead Safe Rental Housing. Case Western Reserve University. Retrieved from https://case.edu/socialwork/povertycenter/sites/default/files/2020-10/Landlords_09022020r_accessible%20%281%29.pdf
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