Uncovering Binghamton's Housing Crisis: A Data-Based Investigation of Landlord Eviction Practices

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Executive Summary

       As of 2023, approximately 103,200 individuals in New York State were experiencing

homelessness, including 98,193 in shelters and 5,007 unsheltered (2023). The leading factors of

homelessness include lack of affordable housing, income inequality, and racial disparities (2020).

This paper specifically focuses on Binghamton, a city in Broome County, New York. Since 1990,

Broome County's population has steadily declined from approximately 53,000. The lack of

affordable housing and undocumented illegal eviction practices by landlords continuously

displace local Binghamton residents, whose housing needs remain unmet. Even with recent

legislative orders like the Eviction Moratorium in 2022 and the Housing Stability and Tenant

Protections Act of 2019, there continues to lack enforcement for these changes (Rathmell n.d.-a).

These issues prompted the formation of the Fair Housing Advisory Board (FHAB), which aims

to address the housing crisis through prevention, protection, preservation, and the production of

affordable housing—while also ensuring landlord accountability. A core part of the FHAB's

mission is to increase public transparency to data on landlords, recognizing that closing this data

gap is essential to shifting power dynamics in favor of tenants. By making this information

available, the FHAB hopes to support the enforcement of housing laws and advocate for stronger

housing policies (Rathmell n.d.-b). In partnership with the FHAB, our project focuses on

cleaning and processing the collected data on Broome County landlords and developing it into a

valuable resource for the community.

       This project builds upon work completed last semester. The previous group, through

collaboration with the Fair Housing Advisory Board and independent research, compiled a list of

the top evictors in Binghamton. They concluded by submitting FOIL (Freedom of Information

Law) requests to the Binghamton City Council for sealed data on landlords, like eviction filings

history. This semester, we received the FOIL data and began processing and cleaning it. Our tasks included consolidating the data into a single Excel sheet, categorizing 396 properties by landlord group, counting the number of code violations landlords received, filling in missing information such as mailing addresses and land use using the Broome County Parcel Mapper, and sending in FOIL requests on new landlords. From this, we created a comprehensive spreadsheet detailing 12 of the most cited landlords in Binghamton and their associated properties, including those with and without code violations. All of this work is to ensure the final summated dataset is compatible with R, the coding program, for the development of an interactive map. In parallel, we continued researching eviction trends across Binghamton zip codes (13901–13905) from 2022 to 2024 to provide a broader context for our analysis. Together, this offers a more holistic view of the city's housing crisis and informs our approach to interpreting the data.

As we near the completion of our project and final deliverable, we have come to fully recognize the significance of this work for current and prospective residents of Binghamton. Throughout weeks of research and collaboration with the Fair Housing Advisory Board, it has become clear that our role goes beyond analyzing data, rather we are actively contributing to the fight for tenant rights and helping to inform the public about the influence landlords have over tenants. Making this data accessible is essential to empower residents, giving them the resources they need to make informed, thoughtful decisions when selecting a place to live.

<u>Introduction</u>

In recent years, the issue of housing insecurity has become increasingly urgent across the United States, especially in economically distressed areas like Broome County, New York.

Within this region, the city of Binghamton (zip codes 13901–13905) reflects many of the struggles faced by small post-industrial cities, including rising rents, share of renters, and a growing population of renters vulnerable to housing instability. The Fair Housing Advisory Board of Binghamton works to uphold tenants' rights and promote safe, fair, and affordable housing throughout the region. Our collaboration centers on data-driven research to shed light on local housing conditions, particularly landlord behavior, eviction patterns, and code enforcement violations. By collecting and analyzing publicly available data, we aim to inform policy, empower tenants, and support a more equitable housing system.

Broome County ranks among the poorest counties in New York State, with a large share of its population spending an unsustainable portion of income on rent (BU Pipe Dream). Despite this, many properties remain poorly maintained, and some landlords exploit systemic gaps in enforcement and tenant protections. Many renters are living paycheck to paycheck and simply can not afford to be educated on their housing rights in day-to-day life, therefore we are here to inform them quickly, accurately and concisely. The need for this research is urgent: eviction filings remain high, housing code violations are widespread, and tenant voices often go unheard. Our project seeks to document patterns of landlord misconduct and identify the worst evictors using data obtained through FOIL requests. This work is not only critical for addressing the housing crisis in Binghamton—it also mirrors larger national trends of rising rental costs, displacement, and inequality. By bringing transparency to local housing conditions, our research has the potential to influence both community-level advocacy and broader conversations about housing justice across the country. With the data we have collected, we are in the process of developing a dashboard that maps out the 12 worst Binghamton landlords and will include a section for future eviction trend narratives and recent news on housing policy.

<u>Methods</u>

Our project with the Fair Housing Advisory Board focused on compiling, cleaning, and analyzing multiple housing-related datasets to identify eviction patterns and support the development of our final project—a data-driven housing advisory dashboard.

Our data was provided by the Fair Housing Advisory Board (FHAB) and includes several datasets focused on housing conditions and landlord activity in Binghamton, New York. The primary datasets include the Parcel Dataset, which contains information about landlords, their properties, geographic data, and affiliated companies; the Case Inquiry Dataset, which documents complaints filed by tenants from January 15, 2022, to September 30, 2024; and the Binghamton L-T Court Watch Dataset, which records eviction cases involving local landlords, and lastly, the FOIL data set which was an additional data was obtained through FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) requests to supplement missing landlord information.

The unit of analysis for this project is individual landlords, affiliated companies and their associated properties. Most of the data were collected between the years 2019 to 2024, and by using the collected data, we calculated landlord rankings based on the number of eviction cases filed against them. Before analysis, we cleaned and standardized the datasets to resolve inconsistencies, such as varying spellings of landlord names across columns and files. For instance, names like "Bing Housing" and "Bing Housing Dev" were unified under "Binghamton Housing Authority" to ensure accurate aggregation. We also converted FOIL responses from PDF format into Excel files and integrated them with the existing data. Each cleaned and filtered dataset was organized into separate sheets labeled by task, such as sheets categorized by violation type, to support future visualization in the housing advisory dashboard.

While working with these datasets, we noticed several notable features that required additional data processing. One key pattern was that multiple properties and LLCs were listed under the same landlord name. For instance, "SALL ASSOCIATES REALTY LLC", "LINE REALTY LLC" , "PBJB LLC", "HUMBLE ORIGINS LLC", "WESTCLEV LLC", and "165 SCHUBERT ST LLC" are all properties owned by Sall Associates. This meant we had to consolidate properties across different FOIL data sheets and resolve duplicate entries to accurately reflect landlord ownership. To achieve this, we merged three separate FOIL datasets, with an additional dataset pending from a recent FOIL request. This merging process was necessary to ensure that all relevant data—especially code violations—were unified under the correct ownership.

In our consolidated dataset, we also included all the properties owned by the top evictors in Binghamton—not just those with code violations—since they would be added to the dashboard as well. We felt it was important to include properties without violations to give tenants a more complete picture, helping them make informed decisions when searching for housing. For instance, tenants may be more cautious upon learning that a property without violations is owned by a landlord with a record of repeated offenses elsewhere. However, because these properties do not have code violations it means these landlords were not sent to court for the properties. This introduced a new challenge where properties without violations often lacked key information, including municipal data, mailing address, zip code, state, city, land use, and most importantly, longitude and latitude. Without these details, we were unable to map them on the dashboard. To resolve this, we used each property's Parcel ID on a parcel mapper to retrieve the missing data, which we then manually entered into the dataset. Lastly, we wrote captions for each parcel that summarized ownership, number of violations at the address,

total violations by the landlord across all properties, and their average annual eviction filings. An example caption includes: "Owner: Douglas/Steven Ritter, Address: 38 Winding Way; Code Violations at this Address: 74; Total Code Violations by Owner: 172; Average Evictions Filed Annually: 75 per year".

Our group built upon data gathered from a previous Fair House Advising group from last semester, with the ultimate goal of making the information understandable and recognizable by tenants in Binghamton who are being abused by their landlords. Thus, our work was more tailored toward visualizing the data in an easily interpretable way rather than gathering or analyzing it in detail. We had two main methods for visualizing this data. First, since most of our data pertains to spatial information on houses in Broome County, we ended up using our dataset to produce detailed maps of our housing data. These were created in both Tableau and R by using the latitude and longitude elements found within our dataset and the address information we had on the houses as well. Along with the maps, we produced numerous graphs using the numeric data in our dataset. This included numbers on the total eviction filings by each landlord, the number of violations committed by each landlord, and the number of complaints filed against these landlords.

There were several limitations in the data we worked with. First, the only way to access court data was through FOIL requests, which can take a significant amount of time to process and return depending on the volume of information requested. While we also incorporated Courtwatch data, this information also takes time to gather and verify because volunteers must attend hearings in person to observe and document cases. All of this is gatherable data because tenants filed complaints to Binghamton City Court. Those who were wrongfully evicted go unreported, and as a result, we can't have a fully comprehensive dataset containing a complete

amount of information on each landlord, and this was something we had to take note of throughout our project. Additionally, there are likely more gaps in the dataset during the COVID-19 pandemic years (2020–2022), due to reporting delays, disruptions in court operations, and policy enforcement such as New York State's eviction moratorium aimed at preventing homelessness during the public health crisis. Another key limitation is that Binghamton City Court does not cover all areas within Binghamton. Some neighborhoods may fall under different jurisdictions that collect and store data separately, meaning certain violations or eviction filings may be missing from our dataset entirely. Lastly, some of the landlords appear to have had 0 complaints put against them and their property. This may not be entirely true. Any time we were missing data on the violations committed by a landlord we inputted a 0 for their number of violations. As a result, these landlords may very well have more violations than seen here, these are just the complaints we know for sure. Ultimately, these are all things that we had to consider for our visualizations and interpretations.

Discussion

Mapped Properties of Binghamton's 12 Most Frequently Cited Landlords

This map higlights geographic trends in tenant complaints and landlord activity across Binghamton
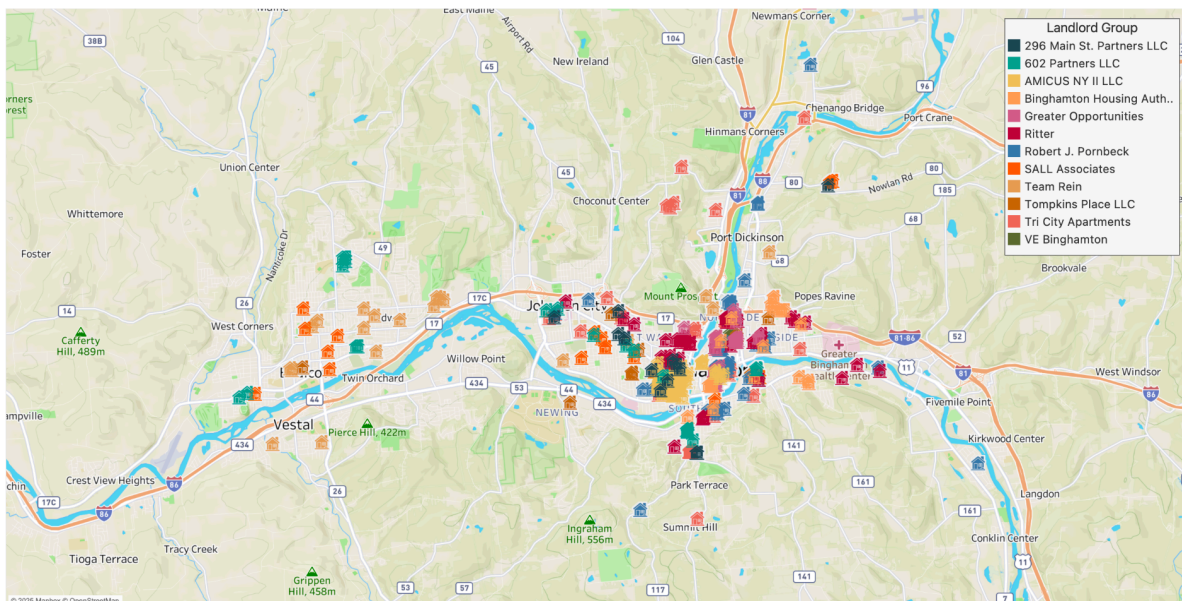
Figure 1. Geographic distribution of properties owned by Binghamton's 12 most frequently cited landlords to highlight clusters of landlord-owned properties associated with higher complaint volumes

To better understand how housing complaints are spatially distributed across Binghamton, we mapped the properties associated with the twelve most frequently cited landlord groups using address data and geographic coordinates from FOIL data. Figure 1 presents this information visually, with each landlord group represented by a distinct color. The map reveals a clear concentration of complaint-prone properties in central Binghamton, particularly around downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, where landlords like AMICUS NY II LLC, Ritter, and Binghamton Housing Authorities operate a significant number of properties. This clustering suggests that tenant complaints are not randomly distributed but are instead localized around specific landlord portfolios and areas with potentially older or poorly maintained housing stock. Unfortunately, we did not have access to racial or demographic data, which could have provided deeper insight into the populations residing in downtown Binghamton and potential reasons behind the higher volume of complaints in that area. However, by mapping the data in this way, we aimed to make the trends more accessible and actionable, especially for current and future tenants who may want to avoid high-risk rental areas. Additionally, we hope this visualization can serve as a useful tool for policymakers and local housing unions, highlighting target areas for inspections, enforcement, or future interventions.

Ranking Binghamton Landlords Based on Evictions

1st	Ritter
2nd	Binghamton Housing Authority
3rd	602 Partners LLC
4th	Robert J. Pornbeck
5th	Greater Opportunities
6th	SALL Associates
7th	Tri City Apartments
8th	VE Binghamton
9th	Team Rein
10th	AMICUS NY II LLC
11th	Tompkins Place LLC
12th	296 Main St. Partners LLC

The Known Amount of Evictions Filed by the Highest Offending Landlord Groups in Broome County

Eviction cases filed between 1/15/2022-9/30/2024 as reported through FOIL-obtained housing court records
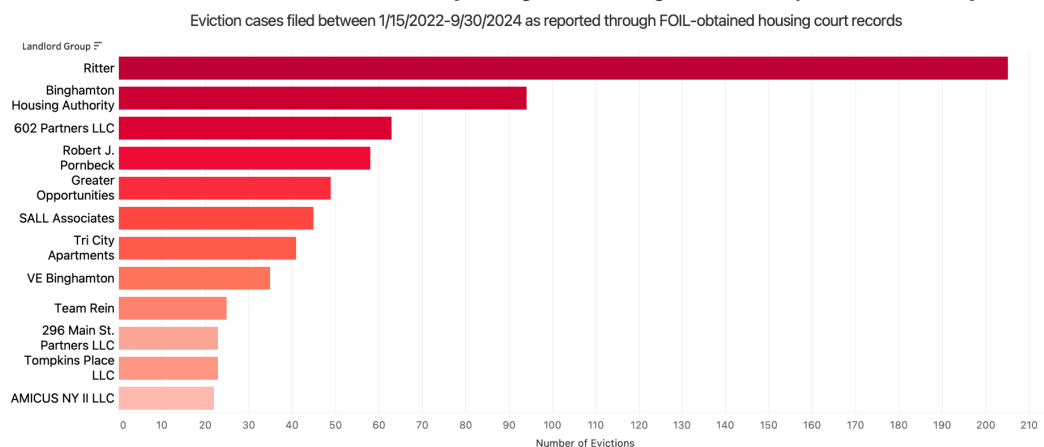
Table 1. Table ranking the 12 Binghamton landlords based on the total number of eviction filings from 2022-2024

Figure 2. Figures are based on FOIL-obtained housing court records and reveal disparities in eviction activity among major property owners, with Ritter and the Binghamton Housing Authority filing the most cases during this period

Within the twelve most frequently cited Binghamton landlords, we created a table to highlight their ranking based on the average number of evictions they have made. Table 1 ranks these landlords by eviction count, while Figure 2 visually illustrates the same data through a bar graph, making disparities in eviction activity more immediately apparent. Ritter leads with 205 evictions, followed by the Binghamton Housing Authority with 94, and 602 Partners LLC with 63—showing a significant gap between the top offenders and other landlords on the list. When presented together, these visuals offer a clearer narrative about which landlords are most actively displacing tenants in Broome County. By organizing landlords in order of eviction frequency, this combined representation helps to contextualize landlord behavior beyond citations alone, emphasizing which property owners are most frequently resorting to eviction processes. However, it is important to note that these figures only account for formal, court-recorded evictions obtained through FOIL requests. They do not capture informal or illegal evictions—such as lockouts, utility shutoffs, or intimidation tactics—which are often unreported and disproportionately impact vulnerable tenants. This is especially valuable for renters, housing advocates, and city officials who are seeking transparency around eviction trends and their key contributors. Not only does this information spotlight repeat offenders, but it also provides context for identifying systemic issues within specific landlord operations. Ultimately, the goal of this ranking is to make eviction data more accessible and actionable—equipping tenants with knowledge that can inform their housing choices and guiding policy efforts to address high-risk rental practices in Binghamton.

Comparison of Average Total Housing Complaints Filed per Municipality and Landlord

Visualizing municipal-level variation in tenant complaint volume using data sourced from housing violations filed between 1/15/2022-9/30/2024
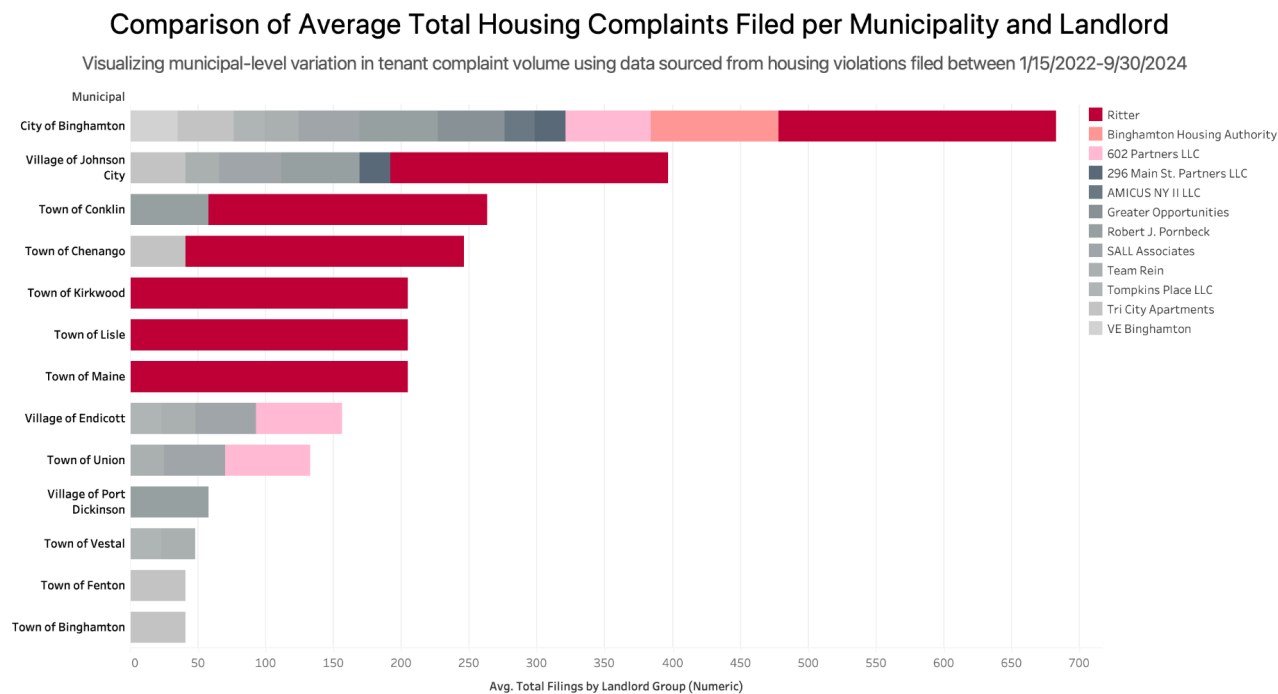

Figure 3. The chart highlights the average total housing complaints filed per municipality and colored by the top 3 landlords, with Binghamton exceeding every other municipality

This stacked bar graph illustrates the average total number of housing complaints filed per municipality, broken down by landlord, from January 2022 to September 2024. Seen at the very top is the City of Binghamton, displaying the highest overall complaint volume (average of 650 total complaints). However, one thing to note, although the City of Binghamton has the highest overall number of complaints, it does not stand out as overwhelmingly dominant when compared to several smaller municipalities. Towns such as Kirkwood, Lisle, and Maine exhibit similarly high average complaint counts, primarily driven by filings against Ritter (205 complaints), which appears prominently across multiple jurisdictions. This suggests that tenant complaints are significantly shaped by the behavior of high-volume landlords operating across municipal boundaries. The color coding reveals the recurring presence of certain landlord groups in the complaint data, emphasizing systemic patterns of tenant dissatisfaction. These findings

raise important questions about landlord accountability and enforcement consistency across municipalities. Moreover, to address tenant complaints more effectively, policymakers and code enforcement should try to identify and intervene in overlooked municipalities where specific landlords are consistently generating high volumes of violations.
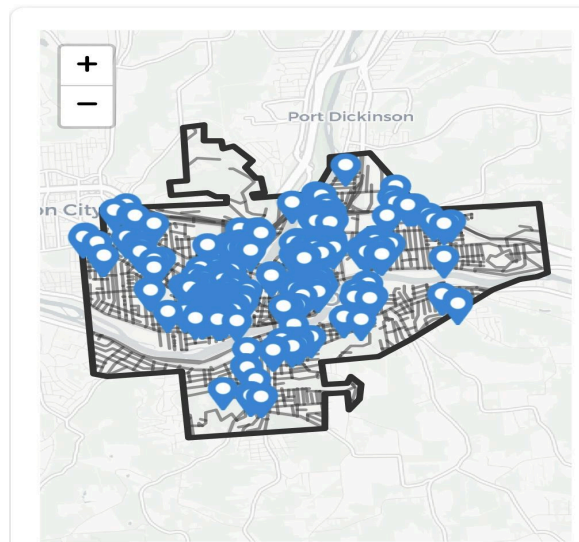

Figure 4. This is an example of the FHAB dashboard. Blue pins on the map represents properties owned by top 12 worst landlords

The map in figure 4 is part of our final dashboard, it has an information panel that displays housing properties owned by the 12 landlords with the highest annual eviction filings in the city of Binghamton. It is created by using R Studio, the map covers the area within zip codes 13901 to 13905 that is the Broome county region. The dashboard includes 394 properties, displaying the names of landlords and their affiliated companies, along with features for selecting, searching, and filtering. Additionally, when users click on a blue pin, an information panel appears, providing details such as the landlord's name, eviction ranking, average evictions filed per year, and the total number of code violations associated with that landlord. At the bottom of the panel, it will also show how many other properties that are also owned by the

selected landlord, users can compare the selected property with other similar properties. The dashboard also includes an "About Us" section where users can learn more about the mission of the Fair Housing advisory board.

Conclusion

The total eviction filing from the city court is not always accurate due to the jurisdiction limitations. The data we collected for the project were mainly coming from Binghamton City Court. In fact, the city court only covers certain regions of the city, therefore the actual number of eviction filings might be underrepresented. Additionally, the eviction filings do not always result in an actual eviction (60%) as there is a gap during the year of Covid and there are also many more informal or illegal evictions that occur outside the court system that are not accurately reflected in court data. Even with the existing data gaps and limitations, the ideas it offers are critical in bringing attention to landlord illegal eviction and reinforcing the need for greater accountability in Binghamton housing policy.

Our final deliverable—the FHAB dashboard, aims to inform tenants of their rights and provide accessible, consolidated information on the top 12 landlords with the highest number of eviction filings and code violations. By making the information visible and easy to navigate, we believe the dashboard offers necessary resources and information that assists tenants to make better housing choices and raises their awareness of landlord's evictions.

The next step, which is already in motion, is the passage of more policies that protect the vulnerable tenants in our community. Earlier in February, the Binghamton City Council unanimously passed the Good Cause Eviction law, which ensures that tenants can not be evicted without a valid reason, such as nonpayment of rent or violation of lease terms (Housing Justice For All). It also allows them to renew their leases at reasonable rates and challenge rent increases

that exceed either 10% or the Consumer Price Index (inflation) plus 5%, whichever is lower. Additionally, this legislation safeguards tenants from retaliatory evictions, ensuring they can report issues or disputes without fear of losing their housing. Although this seems like a very logical and fair law, it was met with extensive public debate between tenants rights organizations and landowners, including Mayor Jared Kraham who expressed concerns over the potential drawbacks this could have on the local housing market. In March, this law was vetoed by Mayor Kraham himself; however, the Binghamton City Council (and our Community Partner Rebecca Rathmel who is on the board) then again voted and overruled the veto and put the law in effect, which was certainly a major victory for tenants. Nevertheless, there is no time to be complacent as this law is only the groundwork for future legislation. Strengthening this policy is definitely the right path and should be combined with a proposal that requires all landlords to register rental units and disclose housing code violations/legal actions in order to increase transparency. A FOIL request for each landlord should not be the only way for transparency and more efficient methods must be accessible for all. Furthermore, the establishment of a tenants rights unit within the City Government that will monitor compliance of landlords and assist tenants with legal challenges will greatly alleviate any ongoing and future issues for tenants. Landlords have excessive political power compared to tenants on housing issues and the latters' lack of voice within policy proposals is one of the major obstacles to the passage of rational laws.

The next set of policies we propose are zoning reforms and increased funding for the development of affordable housing. From our research and time working with the FHAB, we learned that Binghamton residents face two major problems: a lack of affordable housing, and competition with housing that is catered towards University students' demands. Since students are more likely to be able to afford higher rent, landowners often cater to them for more

profitable business, leaving the already financially struggling residents in the city stranded. Although these same students contribute to Binghamton's vibrance and economy, their housing needs have inadvertently exacerbated already dire affordability issues for the locals. A multifaceted approach that includes thoughtful zoning, targeted development initiatives and robust community engagement are necessary to ensure a solution for this complex problem. If this next step involves tackling these two issues whilst simultaneously strengthening the Good Cause Eviction law, we firmly believe that there will be a future in which Binghamton residents can find housing safely and affordably.

But, as mentioned in the section above, we also recognize that this is only the beginning of the project, the dataset and dashboard will require continuous updates and improvements in the future, for it to be well served its purpose. And this can only be carried forward by future FHAB teams, and our community partners. We believe that our dashboard built a concrete foundation for the future improvement, but to address the systemic issues underlying Binghamton's housing crisis will require not only just more improved and completed datasets, but also stronger policies, improved enforcement mechanisms and collaborative efforts to protect tenants' rights.

**From the workshop, we included an executive summary. Additionally, we made our discussion section to be more detailed and explained the importance of each visualization in relation to the information in our research report . Furthermore, we remade the map and other visualizations to include captions at the bottom. We also integrated the limitations better and to be at the end of the methods section rather than near the conclusion.

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