

The Dallas Morning News

Dallas must not let callous landlords win this round

[Editorials](#)

October 7, 2016

One of Dallas' largest slumlords, HMK Ltd., is taking gall and obstinance to a new despicable low.

The outfit is threatening to evict more than 300 tenants from single-family rental units that HMK manages in West Dallas, making them pawns in the company's scorched-earth fight against tough new housing policies. Additionally, HMK has the nerve to blame the city for the potentially devastating crisis that its callous action could cause.

HMK is the poster child for what's been wrong with housing in Dallas. The company has a long history of exploiting low-income tenants who pay cheap rents for barely habitable homes. That's something HMK got away with because the city's previous housing code made it tough to crack down on violations involving single-family rentals.

How cold it is for HMK to toss mothers with small children and other low-income people into the street because the company still doesn't want to fix properties that have long been in disrepair.

This showdown grew out of Mayor Mike Rawlings' pledge, as part of his Grow South strategy, to clean up the southern Dallas rental scene. While several landlords pledged to fix their dilapidated properties, HMK and Dennis Topletz, another manager of substandard housing units, refused. The city is currently fighting Topletz in court.

Several nonprofits, including the Wesley-Rankin Community Center and Dallas Area Interfaith, are frantically seeking options for emergency shelter for the HMK renters.

We're counting on the city to help find those solutions. In particular, Mayor Pro Tem Monica Alonzo must take an active role in standing up for constituents who have suffered far too long in substandard housing.

HMK has made a business of disregarding its tenants, neighborhoods and the city. The company must not win this round.