

Assessment Smoke-free Rental Housing in Springfield, MO

Prepared by the Springfield-Greene County Health Department

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Background

In March of 2018, the Springfield Greene County Health Department completed a [feasibility study](#) of smoke-free housing in Springfield. The study determined that smoke-free housing provides health, safety and economic benefits to both property managers/owners and occupants, and the voluntary implementation of smoke-free housing policies is feasible in Springfield through targeted education and advocacy. The study also determined a need for an assessment of current smoke-free housing policies in Springfield. This report is a completion of that study.

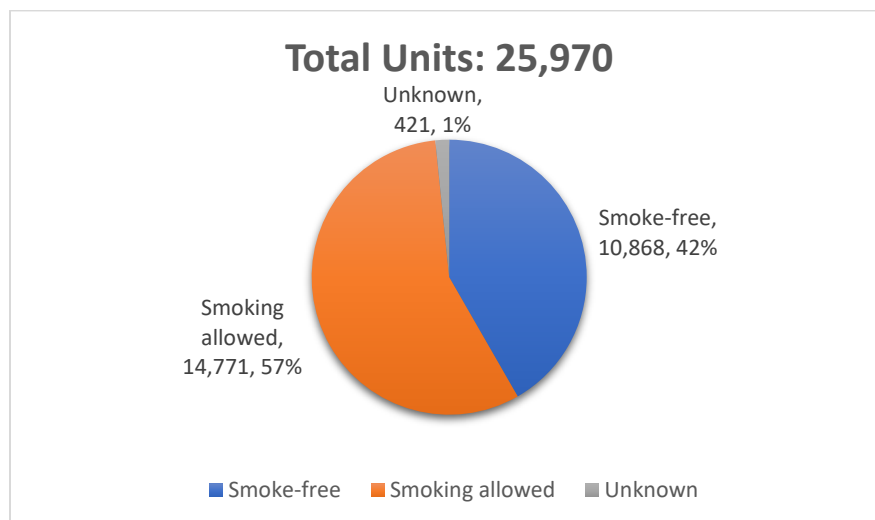
Methodology

In its assessment, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department used the latest information available in through public sources. Through phone calls to management companies and owners, along with extensive online research of websites owned by apartment management companies, apartment listing websites maintained by third party companies (such as apartments.com), the Greene County Assessor's website and City of Springfield licensing information, we were able to obtain information on 665 multi-family addresses in Springfield, accounting for 25,970 individual units. For the purposes of the assessment, multi-family is defined as more than two-units per building. Data points collected include the apartment address, census tract, total number of units, total number of smoke-free units, the name of the property management company or owner and rent. To be considered smoke-free, the lease must state that smoking is not allowed in individual units. Efforts were made to verify all information directly with the property owner or manager, but when that was not possible, some assumptions, such as rent, were made based on similar properties.

Also important to note is considerations were made for buildings in which only a certain number of units are smoke-free. Initial concerns were identified for how to classify the units in these buildings, since studies show neighboring units of units where smoking occurs are exposed to the effects of secondhand smoke. One possibility was to not consider any units smoke-free if they are in a building with other units in which smoking is allowed. However, it was determined that the number of units in buildings with varying policies is statistically insignificant.

Conclusions

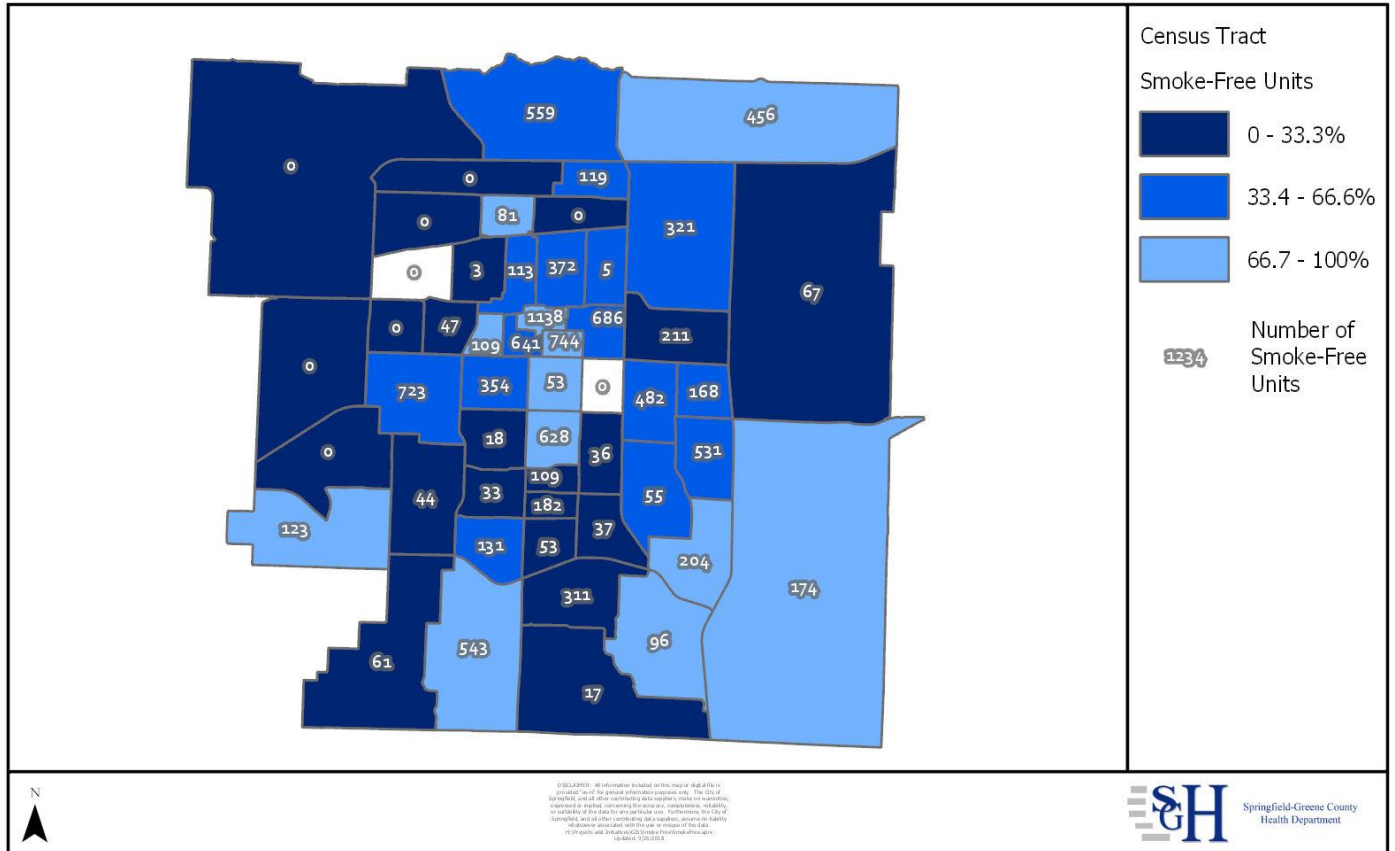
Of the 25,970 units assessed in Springfield, smoking is allowed in 14,771 (56.56%) units; 10,868 (41.85%) are smoke-free; and we were unable to determine the smoking status in 421 (1.62%) units.



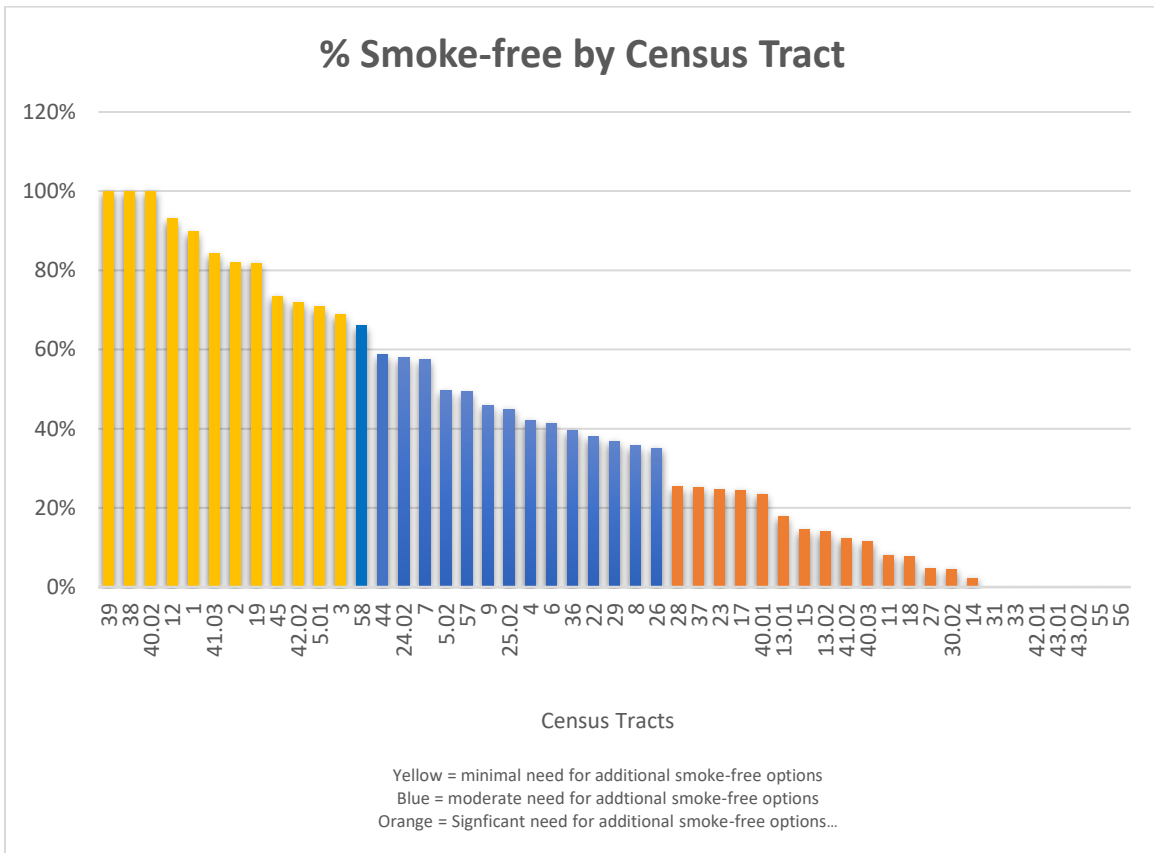
Smoke-free by census tract

The properties were also evaluated by census tract. Census tracts in which 0-33% of units are smoke-free are considered to have a significant need for additional smoke-free options; census tracts in which 33.1-66% of all units are smoke-free are considered to have a moderate need for additional smoke-free options and; census tracts in which 66.1-100% of all units are smoke-free are considered to have a minimal need for additional smoke-free options.

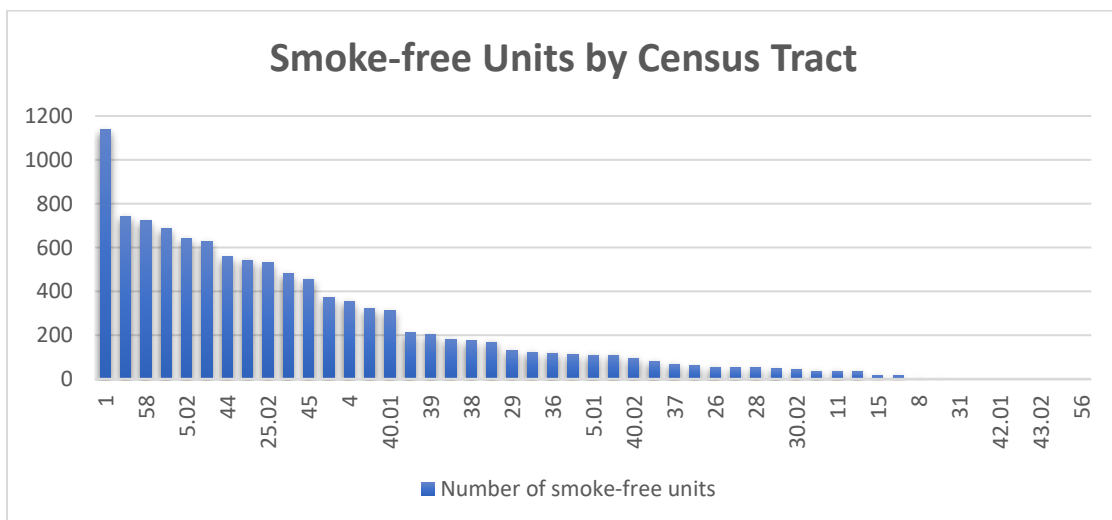
Based on the percent of total units which are smoke-free, twelve (12) census tracts in Springfield are considered to have a minimal need for additional smoke-free options; fifteen (15) census tracts are considered to have a moderate need for additional smoke-free options; and twenty-two (22) census tracts have a significant need for additional smoke-free options.



Overall, three census tracts have 100% smoke-free multi-family rentals, including 38, 39 and 40.02. A total of seven census tracts offer no smoke-free units. These include census tracts 31, 33, 42.01, 43.01, 43.02, 55 and 56.



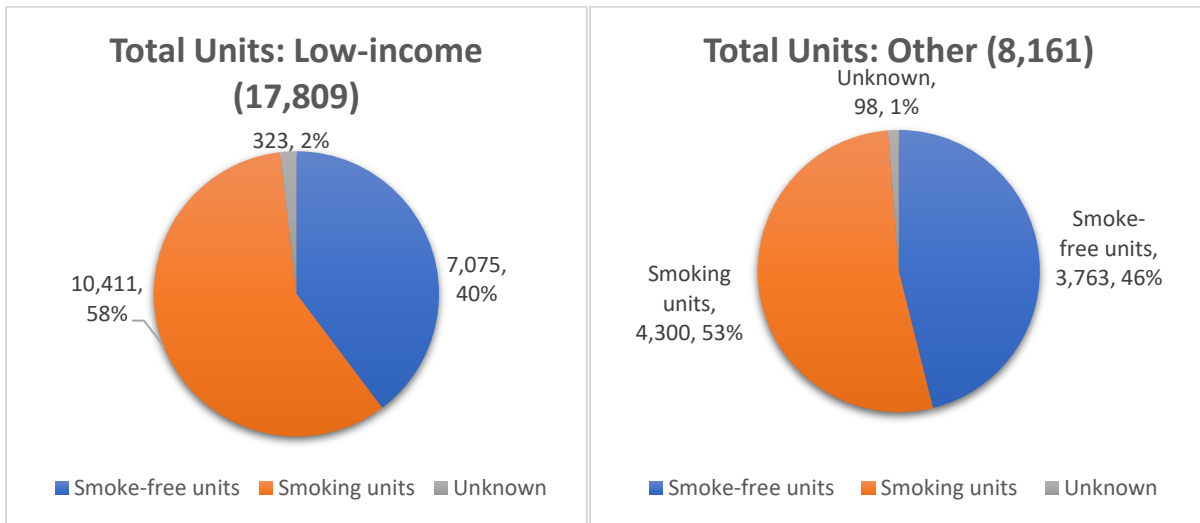
Looking by number of units instead of percent, census tracts 1, 2 and 58 have the most smoke-free units, respectively. Census tract 1 boasts 1,138 smoke-free units; census tract 2 has 744 smoke-free units and tract 58 has 723 smoke-free options. All with 0 smoke-free units, census tracts 31, 33, 42.01, 43.01, 43.02, 55 and 56 have the least number of smoke-free options.



Smoke-free by income

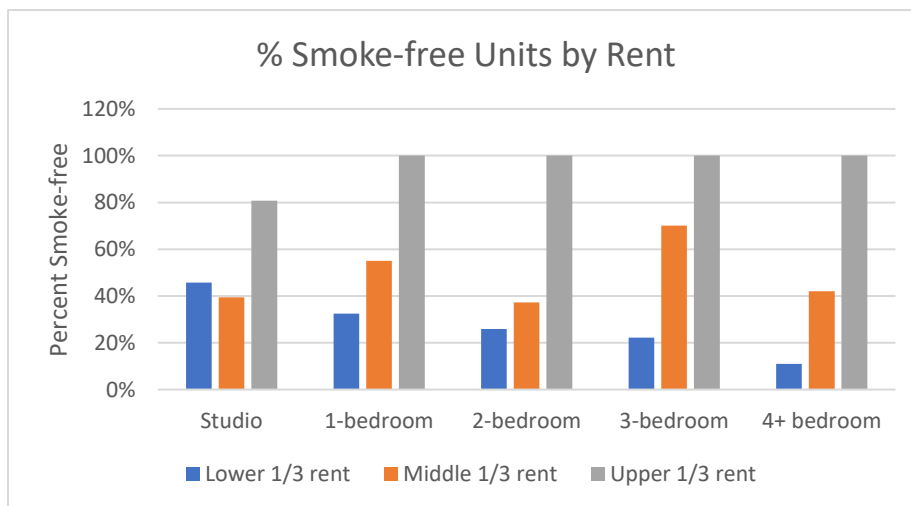
We also assessed if income levels are a factor in the percent of smoke-free housing units available in certain census tracts. In our assessment, 28 census tracts are considered low-income and 21 are not. Low-income census tracts for the purposes of this study are ones in which more than 20% of the residents are living below the Federal Poverty Level.

The assessment shows a disproportionate percent of smoke-free units available in low-income census tracts compared to other census tracts. Of the total units available in low-income census tracts, approximately 40% are smoke-free compared to 46% in census tracts not classified as low income. However, it's important to note that there are more smoke-free units available in low-income census tracts compared to other tracts because there are more units overall available in low-income census tracts.



Smoke-free by rent levels

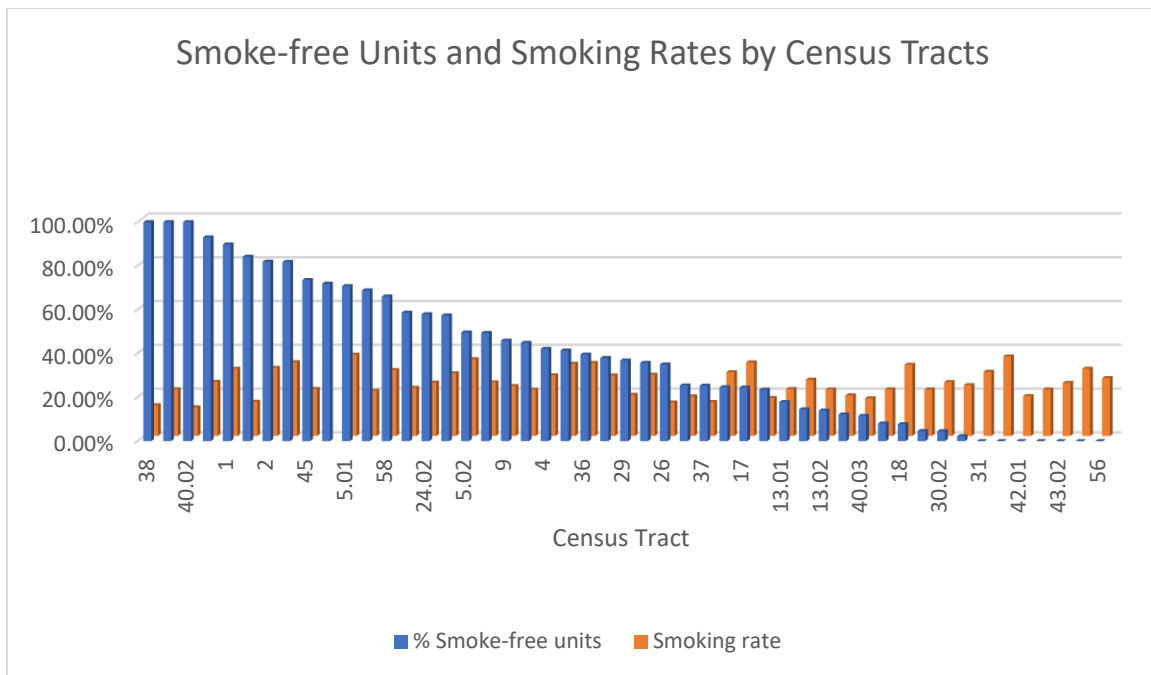
Also assessed are the number and percent of smoke-free units by rent. We grouped rent ranges into three equal levels. For example, one-bedroom apartments with rent from \$295-630 are in the lower third percentile; rent from \$61-966 are in the middle third percentile; rent above \$966 are in the upper third. We included studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom and four or more bedrooms in this assessment. Again, we found disproportionate percent of smoke-free units among lower-rent units. The lower the rent, the fewer smoke-free options. For example, approximately 40% of all one-bedroom apartments in the lowest third of rent levels (\$295-630/month) are smoke-free; 55% of the middle third rent level (\$631-966/month) are smoke-free; and 100% of the highest rent level (\$967-1301/month) are smoke-free. In fact, 100% of all one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units in the highest 1/3 of rent levels are smoke-free compared to 50% or less for the lowest third.



Impact of smoking rates on smoke-free housing

Finally, we assessed if tobacco rates in census tracts have any impact on the number of percent of smoke-free units available. There is a perception that there are fewer smoke-free options in areas with higher smoking rates because there is a greater demand for units which allow smoking. We utilized the Springfield-Greene County's [Canary Measure](#) to assess if this is the case.

Smoking rates in census tracts appear to have no impact on the availability of smoke-free housing. In the 10 census tracts with the highest smoking rates, four are considered to have a significant need for additional smoke-free housing, three are considered to have a moderate need for additional smoke-free housing, and four have a minimal need for additional smoke-free housing. In the 10 census tracts with the lowest smoking rates, three are considered to have a minimal need for smoke-free housing, one is considered to have a moderate need and six are considered to have a significant need.



Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department (SGCHD) makes the following recommendations:

- Landlords and property management companies should consider creating smoke-free policies to provide equitable health benefits to all tenants, regardless of physical locations, rent or income.
- SGCHD should provide guidance and support for landlords and property management companies interested in adopting smoke-free policies.
- SGCHD should work with partners to provide guidance and education to tenants to foster interest in smoke-free housing options.
- SGCHD should re-assess Springfield rental housing in three years to determine outcome of advocacy efforts.