

1 postal employee to inspect 503 SROs in city

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SROs were contacted about the requirement.

The one staffer that the U.S. Postal Service has assigned to the task is overwhelmed by sheer volume, Masiak says.

"How many can one person handle doing the whole process?" Masiak asks. "In a month maybe you could do 10. That'll take four years. And 10, I think is high."

The mailbox legislation by Supervisor Chris Daly came after SRO Collaborative activists and tenants put pressure on the Postal Service to change its designation for SRO hotels from "transitional housing" — which warranted only a single bundle delivery — to permanent residences. Front desk clerks receiving the bundles sorted and distributed mail in varied receptacles, even using cardboard boxes.

Tenants complained of lost and delayed mail, missing government checks and mail getting into the wrong hands. They said the SRO rooms were their permanent homes, citing long residencies. Moreover,

they said, they had a right to privacy and security.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, called for a congressional inquiry.

USPS Customer Services Manager Robert Reed relented. He promised that mail would soon be going into any SRO that had private, approved boxes. Daly's legislation, written without post office input, followed making the change official.

The Residential Hotel Mail Receptacles ordinance requires SRO owners to install individual mailboxes within one year after the measure passed. That was eight months ago, so they all should be in by now.

SRO tenants who believe the owner hasn't complied can petition the Stabilization and Rent Board for a rent reduction. But no one has yet come to the board, according to Delene Wolf, executive director.

Daly, when running for re-election in 2006, told The Extra he considered the mailbox ordinance one of the 10 best laws he had gotten passed. But because it wasn't crafted with post office consultation, it failed to take into account USPS restrictions that now exempt certain SROs with insufficient

space, and the lack of manpower that's bogging down the legislation.

Some SROs are 70 years old or more with space limits and can't comply with USPS specifications.

The glitch caused "some consternation" last year, the June 2007 issue of Apartment Association News reported. The mailbox law was "in flux," it said, and invited any SRO owner who had successfully installed boxes to explain how it was done.

"We didn't get any calls or emails," said Sean Pritchard, government and community affairs director. "We have received a few calls telling us there are space problems. Two weeks ago an owner called and said he had no room for them and wanted to know what to do."

Pritchard said he called the Department of Building Inspection and was told owners had to follow the law but that having "no space" qualified as an exemption.

"What needs to happen," Masiak says, "is a meeting between the post office and Department of Building Inspection." ■

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