

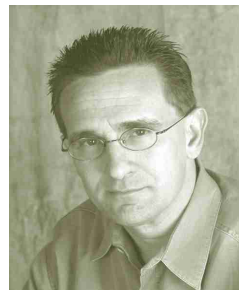
I HAVE OWNED RENTAL PROPERTY for over 5 years now, and it has been an interesting journey into the mindset of those that are, and will continue to be, lifelong renters. I will use my Porterdale properties as an example. Porterdale is an old textile mill town in Newton County, Georgia. Like most mill towns, the economy of the area went downhill after the mill closed. The mill originally owned the homes. Families who worked there were provided housing as part of their compensation. In 1962 the homes in this area were sold off to private owners. Many workers who already lived in these mill houses purchased them. We are now seeing a renewal of communities like Porterdale, a town where the mill has been converted into loft apartments and businesses, and the downtown commercial buildings are in the process of restoration. Recovery is slow. Time is a necessity for a mill village to come back. Many homes in the area, most built in the 1920's or 30's, need renovations to attract higher rents.

I own eight properties in Porterdale, and I have observed some common behaviors that tell a story. A good percentage of renters that move to the area are looking for affordable living arrangements while they rebound from bad decisions or bad luck. Something has cost them everything, maybe a broken marriage, illness, a habit, etc. These renters plan to stay long enough to move on to something better. Often the area affects them, and they are pulled back into a vicious cycle of bad habits that push them to the bottom once again. Some do succeed and move on to better things. I checked a year or so back, and calculated that roughly 95% of my tenants in Porterdale smoked. Almost every household had at least one smoker. I am not after smokers, but these individuals struggle from month to month to afford their rent. Many drink regularly as well. There is always an excuse for why they did what they did. Their natural gravitation towards people of similar destructive habits prevents any hope of improvement. When I receive calls inquiring about the amount of the rent, I either hear "that's not too bad", "I can't afford that", "that's too expensive", or "do you have anything else cheaper?" Unlike some renters of my more pricey homes outside the area, I have never had someone in Porterdale negotiate the price or ask for some form of concession. Those renters in the mill village look at my prices like the price tag on a grocery item.

Choices repeated daily put people where they are. Mistakes of the past take time and patience to correct, but it can be done. Most I see don't want to do anything without instant gratification. Habits are too overpowering to allow consistent sacrifice and work towards the future. Maybe this is why some resort to selling drugs: let's make lots of money now. I see many who are "self employed" as house cleaners, handymen, painters, etc. Sometimes this is a start of a home-based business, but the ones I see in the village are often unemployable in the public sector. Either they have a bad temper, or a habit that prevents them from holding a job. During cleanup after moveouts I often found plenty of pornographic



materials and tons of pennies in my rented Porterdale properties. I even found a large ziplock bag containing a Bible and porn.



CRAIG ELLIOTT is the owner of *EE Productions*. He is a portrait and media photographer with corporate background in telecommunications. His passion is photography. Craig is currently working on his first book.

CONTACT: craig@eephotography.net

Copyright 2008 Impact Times. The information contained in this article may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise distributed without the prior written authority of Impact Times.