



Kenosha Landlord Association

A Local Chapter of the Wisconsin Apartment Association

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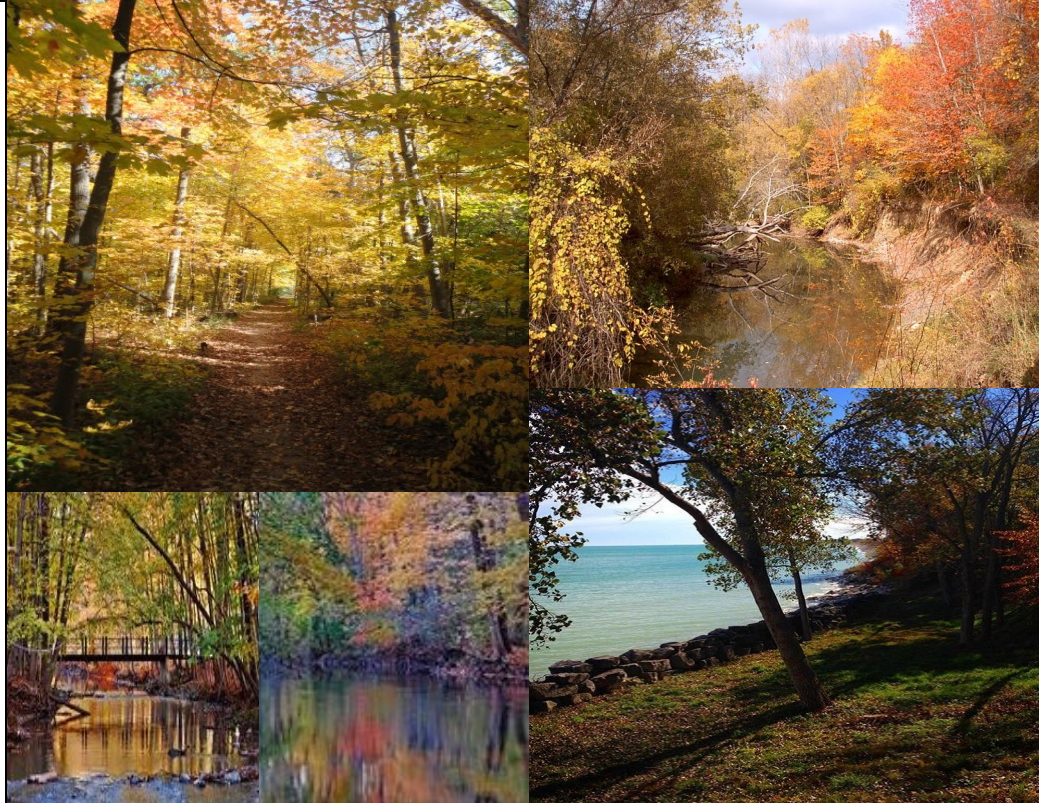
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Myer

Kenosha Landlord Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 1505,
Kenosha, WI 53141

www.kenoshalandlordassociation.org
www.waaonline.org



To Our Members

We would like to thank our Legislative Lobbyist, Gary Goyke for his in-depth discussion on items he is currently working on in Madison to benefit landlords. Our thanks also go out to Samantha Kerkman, the 61st Assembly District Representative in the Wisconsin State Assembly, for joining us and talking about the upcoming election.

At the next meeting, Wednesday, October 19th, Barbara Domenk-Stasierowski, formerly the Director of Bear Property Management, will be giving a presentation on Screening Criteria. Barb has 40 years of property management experience and is very knowledgeable in the screening process. Barb will share with us how to put together criteria to use in our screening process that will ensure we are compliant with the new laws that are currently in effect.

This is a meeting you do not want to miss!

DISCLAIMER: The Kenosha Landlord Association publishes this newsletter to create awareness of issues relating to the rental housing industry. Information is compiled from a variety of sources and the views and concerns expressed by the contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the Association.



Tenant Screening: Finding The Perfect Renter

Source: <http://www.zillow.com/rental-manager>; By Amie Fisher



In this guide, you'll learn how to qualify every prospective renter who contacts you by eliminating unqualified and problem tenants early in the application process through proper tenant screening. You may feel like you don't have the time to screen every renter carefully. After all, each day your rental is vacant, you are losing money. Tenant screening is one of the most critical aspects of the leasing process. Lead qualification will help you weed out poor tenants, leaving you with responsible, long-term renters at your property. Here are several steps landlords should take to find the best tenants.

Step 1: Prequalify tenants over the phone.

Hearing the phone ring or receiving a notification in your inbox is an exhilarating feeling. That means people are interested in your rental, but don't immediately invite prospective tenants to a showing. The tenant screening process starts here. You don't want to waste your time on people who aren't serious or aren't qualified for your property.

Frame your questions carefully.

The way you ask questions can affect the way renters answer them. If you say, "This unit only fits two people. How many people will be living here?", it tells them exactly what you're looking for, giving them the opportunity to be dishonest. Instead, ask, "How many people are looking to move with you?" to get them to disclose their information first.

Not qualified for this property?

If a prospective renter doesn't fit the property they've inquired about, you may have a unit later on that will be a better fit. Add every prospective tenant to a spreadsheet so you can track the progress of each rental application and compare qualifications. If you have more than a handful of rental properties, you will need a lead tracking system to stay organized and match prospective tenants to available properties that will fit their needs.

Invite prescreened renters to the showing.

After filling out the prequalification sheet for everyone who's expressed interest, you should be left with the most serious prospects. Invite them to take a tour of the apartment or rental property.

Step 2: Show the property.

Don't skip this step, no matter how perfect prospective tenants sound during the prequalification. Put a face to the name and meet your renter. After your renter signs the lease, you'll have many interactions with them during their tenancy, so it's important to get a feel for their personality. A good landlord-tenant relationship can go a long way toward reducing problems at your rental property.

Add social pressure.

Rather than invite prospective tenants to individual showings, host a rental open house. Attendees will realize that they're competing for the unit, which in turn will increase their interest and create a sense of urgency to move through the application process faster. Keep track of these attendees in your spreadsheet.

Step 3: Accept and analyze applications.

While you may have a good — or bad — feeling about an applicant, going with your gut instinct won't protect you in court if you're facing discrimination accusations or evicting a tenant. Require all interested renters to completely fill out a rental application for your records.

Use the same criteria for all applicants.

To avoid fair housing violations, remain objective and use the same application and requirements when screening renters. This will allow you to fairly compare prospective tenants and choose the best one based on hard facts.

Continued on page 3



Tenant Screening: Finding The Perfect Renter (con't)



Keep a paper trail.

The applicant's paperwork can help protect you against discrimination complaints. Although it is ultimately your choice as the landlord to decide who lives at your property, tenant selection must stay within the guidelines mandated by the federal Fair Housing Amendment Act. Also check your local and state discrimination laws for additional regulations. To minimize the risk of a fair housing violation, treat each applicant equally and hold on to the paperwork for at least two years. If you face a fair housing charge, your documentation can help support your case.

Check applications for disqualifying factors.

Carefully read all the applications and check for any obvious disqualifying factors or inconsistencies. For example, if the applicant is currently unemployed and has no other income sources, that's a red flag.

Be wary of false information.

It's not a criminal offense to lie on a rental application form. Some people give false information because they think landlords won't double-check. Don't assume application information is accurate until you've run credit and reference checks.

Step 4: Perform reference checks.

Even though a rental application looks great, don't stop your tenant screening process there. Dishonest people can still slip through the cracks during the application and prescreening process. Checking references will give you a more complete picture of your tenant's financial and rental history.

Check LinkedIn for employers.

Search for the applicant and their employer on LinkedIn. Their LinkedIn profile should match the employment history on their application. If they don't have a LinkedIn profile, nearly everybody is found on Google. If the information you find online seems inconsistent or is nonexistent, keep this in mind as make your reference calls.

Carefully construct questions.

Companies have various regulations on how much information they're able to disclose about their employees, so just use employer phone calls to verify information on the application. For example, instead of asking, "How much does Thomas Baker earn?" ask, "Thomas Baker stated in his application that he earns \$4,550 per month. Is this correct?" You'll increase the likelihood of getting a response if it's a yes or no question.

Be wary of impersonators.

Landlords and employers can easily be impersonated. Carefully word your questions to make it possible to catch fakers off-guard. For example, don't tell them what their role is by saying, "Hi, I'm a landlord doing reference checks on Thomas Baker and he listed you as his landlord. How was he as a tenant?" This will tell the person answering the phone that they're supposed to be a previous landlord. Instead, ask questions such as, "Hi, I'm a landlord doing reference checks on Thomas Baker. How do you know him?" If you hear, "We met in college," you'll quickly detect a fraud.

Check for criminal and sex offender history.

Unsurprisingly, landlords aren't very keen on tenants with a conviction history or a record of sexual offense. While some credit checks will include criminal history, it may exclude certain convictions. Use a third-party site such as TransUnion's SmartMove service to conduct a full criminal background check. Use a "Megan's Law" database to see if the applicant is a convicted sex offender. Landlords may deny applicants for convictions of criminal offenses.



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Step 5: Run a credit report.

Honest applicants will be upfront about their poor financial history or bad credit, while other renters may try to avoid straight answers about their credit. Credit reports are an important part of tenant screening and can tell you a lot about a renter: payment history, bankruptcies and sometimes criminal convictions and previous evictions. Don’t trust anything until you see the numbers yourself in their credit report.

Perform a soft credit check.

All three major credit rating agencies (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) offer services that allow tenants to initiate a credit report that can be shared with a landlord. These soft checks will not ding a renter’s credit. Be wary of accepting a copy of a credit report directly from a prospective renter. Printed and digital copies can be altered. By using TransUnion’s SmartMove or Experian Connect you can feel certain that the information is accurate.

Analyze the report.

Once you get the report back, look for any history of poor payment history or a low credit score. Credit scores will tell you if the applicant makes credit payments on time or owes money, and also indicates the length of their credit history and the types of credits used. If your tenant doesn’t pay his credit card bills, he might not pay his rent either.

Get credentialed if you run reports often.

To run a credit report yourself, you need to be credentialed to access sensitive information. Use a screening solutions company such as NTN Online to get started with obtaining your credentials. You may need a business license to prove that you are a professional in rentals.

Step 6: Make a decision.

After reviewing the tenant’s application, checking references and reviewing their credit report, the applicant will either be signing a lease or receiving a rejection letter.

The rejection letter.

Unqualified applicants — those with poor credit, insufficient income, negative references or a history of criminal offenses — should be turned away. According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, which is a national regulation, landlords must provide prospective tenants with a letter informing them why they were not approved, what agency you used to process their credit report and information on how they can receive a copy of the credit report. If you had a good reason to turn them away, it will all be backed by documentation.

Lease or rental agreement signing.

Congratulations! You have your next tenant. Review all the rules and regulations of your property with your new tenant to make sure they have a clear understanding of your expectations. It’s crucial for the tenant to have all of the funds for the security deposit and first month’s rent ready to hand to you before signing the rental commitment. Once you have received all payments, have tenants sign two copies of the lease and give them one copy for their records. To make it easier, consider using a digital lease.



Listing Photography Tips For Your Rental Property

Source: www.propertyware.com

Photos are usually the first thing a renter sees when browsing through homes or apartments for rent, and they can make or break your rental listing. Be sure your ad gets the attention it deserves by including 10 to 15 high-quality photographs.

You don't need to be a professional photographer to take great photos, but keeping these tips in mind can help you bring out the best in your property.

Shoot from different angles.

Take several photos of the same room from different angles — especially in small spaces like bathrooms. The lighting and frame of reference will change depending on where you stand, so take shots from different corners and heights. Corner shots add dimension to the photo, while shooting straight ahead at a flat wall makes the room appear smaller than it is.

Take advantage of natural light.

Good photos are all about lighting. Without enough lighting, the room may appear blurry and gloomy. Take photos of your property during the day, and supplement the natural light by turning on indoor lights and opening blinds or curtains. Uncovering the windows serves a dual purpose: It brings more light into the room, and it makes the space feel bigger.

Use the grids as a guide.

Turn on your camera's gridlines. Most smartphone cameras include this option in the settings to get the best composition in your photos. These lines can help you improve the balance and perspective of the photo by applying the "rule of thirds": When looking at the 9 x 9 grid on your camera, align the focal point of your room with one of the points where those lines cross. This puts the featured room element one third of the way into the frame (rather than in the center), which often results in a more interesting and eye-pleasing image.

Clear the clutter.

It should go without saying, but cleaning and tidying up before your shoot makes a huge difference in creating sloppy vs. professional-looking photos. Clutter in the room distracts viewers from the main features of the property, so remove as many extra items as possible — think tissue boxes, refrigerator art, toys, stacks of mail and the like. Make the bed, clear away cords and wires, and hide countertop appliances before photographing your property. And even though it seems obvious...close the toilet lid!

Stay out of the picture.

When photographing bathrooms or other spaces with mirrors, check your angle to avoid capturing your reflection in the shot. Also, when using the flash, make sure it's not hitting the mirrors. If the home is pet-friendly and occupied during your photography session, leave the animals out of the picture. The cat curled up on the bed or the pup looking in through the sliding glass door may be cute to their owners, but there are better ways to communicate that pets are allowed.

Edit wisely.

Basic smartphone cameras come with easy-to-use photo editing tools, but be careful about over-adjusting the brightness and contrast. Overexposed or filtered photos can send the message to renters that you're trying to hide less desirable features.

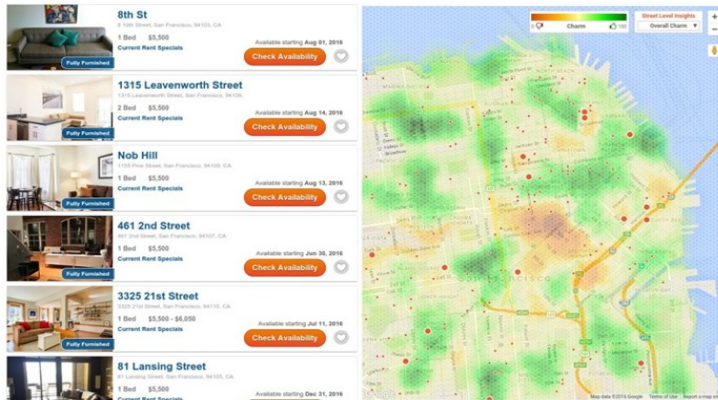
First impressions count. Put your rental's best face forward and stand out among the listings with a selection of stellar photos.

New Apps To 'Virtualize' Apartments Of The Future

The technology of the next-generation apartment will span space and time.

By [Joe Bousquin](#); www.propertymanager.com

When Dan Laufer thinks about the future of leasing and living in an apartment, a single, summary phrase comes to mind. “More remote decision making,” says Laufer, CEO and co-founder of the San Francisco–based apartment ratings and search app RentLingo. “Things like virtual reality, location intelligence, direct booking, and flexible lease lengths will become more common.”



The RentLingo Charm Index rates a location's overall desirability on a scale of 0 to 100 based on factors including crime, local versus chain businesses, and transportation options.



RentLingo's Noise Index app lets apartment hunters know how noisy neighborhoods are based on aspects such as nearby restaurants, bars, public transportation, and amount of traffic close-by roads typically receive.

Indeed, you can find location intelligence on listings in RentLingo's Charm Index, which uses big data to tell you exactly how cute, hip, or blasé a neighborhood and property are, with information about the proximity of chain stores and franchises versus one-off boutiques and eateries. Then, there's RentLingo's Noise Index, which will disclose a noisy highway, passing streetcar, or elevated train before you find out about it at 3 a.m. the day after you move in. Those aspects, as well as reviews from former property managers that RentLingo pays to mystery-shop units, help set the app apart.

“It's clear that location matters to renters, but there are aspects of location that photos or descriptions can't fully capture,” Laufer says. “More transparency on location quality has had a big impact on the lead-conversion rate on our site.” But Laufer's observation about remote decision making doesn't apply only to RentLingo's indexes, or to how those indexes enable prospective residents to get a sense of place without actually visiting a property. Laufer's comment also highlights a broader aspect of the technology we're likely to see in multifamily next-generation apartment: namely, that while apartments are real estate, and real estate is all about location, the apartments of the future will leverage unique aspects and services remote to that location.

That might translate into a prospect sitting 3,000 miles away from her future apartment while taking a real-time, virtual tour of it, or a resident lounging in his current apartment's living room and summoning an on-demand self-storage vendor to show up at his door within the hour. All in all, it means that the defining aspects of real estate—the uniqueness of each location and its sensory feel, as well as the inherent value and inevitable limitations those physical characteristics create—are about to be blown wide open. In fact, in some places, they already have been. Take, for example, the use of virtual tours to lease an apartment today.

“It's astonishing how many renters select their units today without seeing the actual property,” says Alo Mukerji, Vice President of Product for Boston-based property management cloud software firm Buildium. “Whether it's because they're moving across the country, travel regularly for work, or they simply live in a rental market that demands quick action, that's what's happening. With virtual reality and video tours, prospective renters have the ability to view the apartment, common areas, and more without having to step inside the building.”

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New Apps To 'Virtualize' Apartments Of The Future

The technology of the next-generation apartment will span space and time.
(con't)

For Tom Bretz, co-founder of the Chicago-based Elmspring Accelerator, which incubates tech start-ups focused on real estate, next-generation apps generally fall into three categories: those that deliver content via video or virtually; those that provide services to residents; and those that help residents connect with each other or the buildings they live in. “There are a variety of categories in play right now,” Bretz says.

Maxwell Peek, executive vice president for new business initiatives at Chicago-based Waterton Associates, an operating partner of Elmspring’s, says those multifamily-focused tech categories are expanding now due to a new generation of entrepreneurs who suddenly have real estate in their sights. “There are a number of young entrepreneurial people who have identified real estate as an industry that’s ripe for disruption,” says Peek, who also sits on Elmspring’s board. “They don’t necessarily have a real estate background, but they’ve been in other industries and recognize the opportunities that are present in real estate today. We’re seeing a ton of intriguing ideas focused on either improving the apartment product from a customer-facing experience, or from an operating standpoint to assess, analyze, and improve our business.”

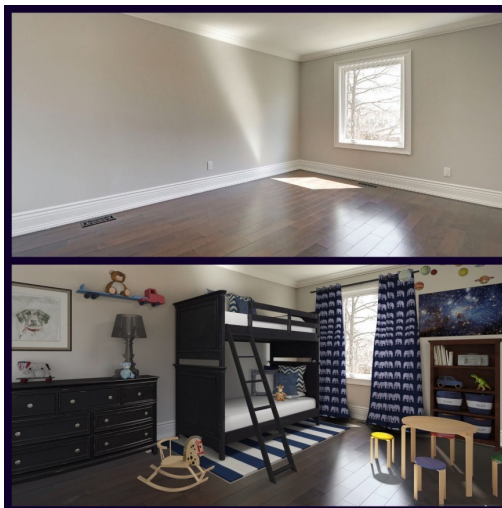
Here’s a rundown of the technology and apps, by category, that are quickly moving into the next-generation apartment.

Virtual Reality and Video

The technology that’s perhaps getting the most attention in multifamily is in the virtual reality (VR) and enhanced–video tour space.

At the National Apartment Association’s conference in San Francisco in June, Apartments.com set up Oculus Rift and HTC Vive virtual reality headsets to allow industry players to virtually “walk through” an apartment. The firm is currently testing the technology, shot on Matterport 3-D cameras, on select listings to let users see and feel the dimensions of remote spaces for themselves. Other firms, such as Floorplan Revolution and Designstor, provide virtual, 3-D renderings and tours of future communities for multifamily operators. Another vendor, San Jose, Calif.–based RoOomy, supplies virtual staging technology to let renters see how their furniture will look in a given space.

“We’re definitely seeing an appetite for 3-D interactive tours and technologies from our multifamily clients, particularly as costs come into alignment with budgets,” says Lorin Horosz, Vice President of Marketing at San Francisco–based brokerage firm Polaris Pacific. “Whether it’s 3-D Matterport scans of physical spaces, or a virtual floor plan where prospects can navigate future spaces on line or via a VR headset, the technology solutions are readily available.”



RoOomy's virtual staging app enables prospective renters to see how their furniture will look in a given space.

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New Apps To 'Virtualize' Apartments Of The Future

The technology of the next-generation apartment will span space and time.

(con't)



Jerry Rodgers, Vice President of Software Development for Apartments.com, says apartment listings with 3-D tours receive 49% more inquiries from potential residents than listings without such tours. “These renters are well-informed [about an] apartment community before they’ve even contacted [it], eliminating those communities that don’t fit their needs,” Rodgers says. “VR has a lot of possibilities to enhance the consumer experience and make it quicker for communities to turn high-quality leads into leases.”

Observers point to other possible uses for VR as well, like connecting with online interior design firms, such as Laurel & Wolf, to experiment with different decorating motifs. Combine those uses with technologies such as multifamily savant Mike Mueller’s LeaseHawk ACE app, a Siri-like automated phone attendant for leasing, and it’s not hard to imagine a touchless move-in process in the not-too-distant future.

While virtual reality allows operators to showcase both existing and future apartments using 3-D photography or renderings, other types of video apps are enhancing virtual tours as well. Take ReaLync, a firm that was shepherded through the Elmspring incubator and offers a real-time video app that allows leasing agents to connect with prospects and give them a virtual tour using a tablet or smart phone.

“It combines all the best features of Skype, FaceTime, and a virtual reality slide show or video,” says Waterton’s Peek, who is currently beta testing the technology. “It provides our on-site teams with a nice tool to make the leasing process easier. They’re able to interact with prospects face-to-face, answer questions, and give them a live tour simultaneously.”

Yet, even as virtual reality and live tours can help prospects make a remote decision to lease an apartment before they ever step inside it, the technology will also give them an authentic view of a property, warts and all.

“Virtual reality is the closest thing to being there that you can get,” says Patricio Navarro, partner at Miami-based virtual reality firm ArX Solutions. “But that means it also shows the good, and the bad. If you have a beautiful property, virtual reality is going to help you. On the other hand, if your property doesn’t look that great, it might actually make you work a little harder, because clients will definitely be able to differentiate between the two.”

Service Apps

The apartment industry is awash in apps right now that are pitching themselves as electronic amenities for residents.

“They’re coming at us fast and furious,” says Nick Alicastro, Vice President of Business Development at Irvine, Calif.-based Western National Property Management, an operator of 22,000 units. “We’re inundated, almost every day, with companies trying to pitch the latest and greatest.”

One pitch that Western National liked came from Updater, an address-updating service that allows new residents to enter their information just once and have all their various financial and subscription accounts updated. The brainchild of CEO David Greenberg, who grew frustrated with the minutia of updating his own life after a move, the app also lets residents arrange for utilities before move-in; forward mail from their old address; send out moving announcements to family and friends; and take advantage of special moving offers. Western National showcases Updater as a way to let residents know apartment operators feel their pain during a move. “Moving is hard; there’s a lot that goes into it, and we want to help residents through the process,” says Laura Bartz, Western National’s Director of Marketing. “The plan is to present it as another amenity, as something that we’re providing to make the process easier for them.”



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Another tech firm making things easier is New York City–based MakeSpace and its on-demand storage app. MakeSpace allows cramped New York apartment dwellers to call on self-storage movers to come to their apartments, pack up superfluous stuff, and have it stored off-site, without having to do any of the heavy lifting. Pictures and a cataloging system allow users to then log in and request items to be brought back to them when they want.

“Tech presents infinite tools to improve a resident’s living experience, and things like Updater and MakeSpace provide great logistical support for renters when moving, which is invaluable for today’s hyper-mobile rental base,” says Christopher Bledsoe, co-founder of New York City based Ollie, an operator of a fully furnished, fully equipped co-living space in the vein of the WeWork and WeLive concepts that lavishes technology on its residents. “More than anything, we’re interested in how tech improves the day-to-day user experience for our residents.”

For Ollie, that includes offering them use of Hello Alfred, a virtual butler app that will drop off residents’ groceries, water plants, pick up prescriptions, or even do a deep clean of their apartment. Ollie also provides residents a membership to Magnises, an event service and app that gets them into exclusive gatherings throughout the city, complete with VIP treatment.

Residential Peer-to-Peer Apps

But Ollie’s most anticipated app is its upcoming Bedvetter service, still in development, which will use dating site like algorithms to match up roommates to share living spaces. “Bedvetter will connect people to form like-minded, compatible roommate situations,” Bledsoe says. Ollie then uses team productivity Slack channels to help residents connect and communicate once they move in.

A plethora of “white-label” social networking apps has also hit the apartment industry to allow residents to connect with one another, whether to coordinate community get-togethers or just share tools or other household items. At Waterton, Peek says the firm is beta testing Mobile Doorman, which not only allows residents to submit service requests in a walled garden, away from the broader Internet, but also provides a community chat function where residents and staff can communicate without the pitfalls of a public Facebook page.

Other examples of resident-to-resident apps include ParqEx, an Elmspring Accelerator company, which allows residents or owners to rent out unused parking spaces, akin to an Airbnb for empty parking spots.

What the Future Holds

All of this technology makes someone like Ollie’s Bledsoe—who, at age 35, is the epitome of an entrepreneur with other industry experience targeting the multifamily space—see unlimited opportunities ahead. Formerly a food and agribusiness analyst at Lehman Brothers who launched online education site Essay101.com from his dorm room, Bledsoe says the apartment industry is on the cusp of being transformed by the technology it’s so quickly adopting.

With just a single location in New York thus far, Bledsoe has plans to roll out Ollie’s all-inclusive living offerings—complete with an “Ollie Box” that provides everything from bath mats to tableware for new residents—in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, N.J., and sees next-generation tech as the kind of offering apartment companies will need to become themselves in the future. “Our business model almost resembles the software-as-a-service model more than it does the traditional apartment rental industry,” Bledsoe says. “Rather than paying rent for a fixed geographical apartment, people will pay a monthly fee that allows them to tap into a vast network of resources across the country and, eventually, the globe.”

Sounds like the ultimate example of how remote decision making, and the technology that enables it, will transform the next-generation apartment.



10 Tips For Tackling Rental Property Maintenance

Source: <http://www.zillow.com/rental-manager/>; By Lindsey Schober

Whether you DIY, hire a professional or do some combination of the two, managing the maintenance of your rental property is a big part of being a landlord. And, as a landlord, you are responsible for keeping your rental property up to code and in great shape for your tenants.

Here are 10 tips for staying on top of your rental property maintenance.

1. Establish clear responsibilities.

A solid maintenance plan starts with your lease. Clearly outline responsibilities for you and your tenant before move-in. Typically, your renter is responsible for minor maintenance and regular upkeep, such as changing lightbulbs or trash removal. Landlords are responsible for larger projects and issues such as plumbing, heating and electrical. You are also responsible for taking care of regular wear and tear and prepping the property for new tenants. Make sure to establish emergency procedures so your renters know how to reach you and understand the time frame in which they can expect a reply. Be sure to keep them updated about your progress, even if it's just to say, "I'm working on it and will tell you more as soon as I know more." Open and productive lines of communications go a long way with renters and encourage them to keep you informed of any issues that may arise — before they turn into big problems. Good communication can also help diffuse a heated exchange. Bonus tip: Before your tenant moves in, stock your rental with some extra light bulbs and air filters. They don't cost much, and it shows your tenants that you're invested in their tenancy — which in turn may increase their motivation to take good care of your home and rent your property long-term.

2. Set a baseline for the condition of your property.

Before a new tenant moves in to your rental, document the condition of everything. Take photos or video and use a move-in/move-out checklist so you don't accidentally miss something. This will help prevent disputes over damages, and it provides proof if you need to withhold the security deposit should the amount of damage exceed normal wear and tear. Wear and tear is expected and is a cost of doing business as a landlord. Things like scratches on the floor, dings on the walls, a broken drawer or an appliance on the fritz come with use over time. However, something like a hole in the wall, a broken window or damage due to pets is more than normal wear and tear and should be deducted from the security deposit. Be sure your tenant knows the condition you expect the property to be in when they move out, and give them plenty of notice (and maybe a well-timed, gentle reminder).

3. Set up (and stick to) a preventative maintenance schedule.

You know that quote, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"? It applies to rental property maintenance too. By adhering to a preventative maintenance schedule, you can catch minor issues before they turn into costly problems for you and your tenants. Build a clause into your lease that requires your tenant to alert you to any issues in a timely manner or face a fee, but also make sure to walk the property every few months to review the appliances, cabinetry, faucets, toilets, shower tiles, basement, roof, windows and every other area of your home. You can rotate what you check seasonally, such as inspecting the gutters in spring or making sure your windows and doors are weatherized ahead of winter, but you'll still want to look at the whole property throughout the year (not just when it's time to get a new tenant). **Bonus tip:** Everything in your rental has a lifespan. Planning for this can help you budget and get ahead of a major property or appliance disaster. If you know your refrigerator is nearing the end of its life, you can plan ahead and purchase a new one when you see a great sale. This way you save money and are ready before your appliance dies. Upgrading fixtures and appliances not only helps you keep on top of maintenance, but also enables you to charge more in rent and keep your property full.

4. Keep landscaping as simple as possible.

Even if your tenants say they love to garden, don't make any changes if you don't have to. Keep landscaping at your rental property as low-maintenance as possible to ensure it looks good all year round. This way you won't need to remind your renter to take care of the lawn or, worse, have to spend time taking care of it yourself. Using native plants can cut down on yard work. So does adding mulch or a patio. While it costs more upfront, you'll save time and money in the long run. Your green-thumbed tenant can purchase a planter box.

Continued on page 11



10 Tips for Tackling Rental Property Maintenance

(con't)

5. Standardize your property(ies).

Whether you have one property or 10, using the same paint, flooring, appliances and hardware can save you time, money and headaches trying to remember which unit has which. Use the same color paint on the ceiling and walls. It makes repainting after a tenant leaves that much easier.

Bonus tip: Some landlords let tenants personalize their properties with interior paint. Whether that is one accent wall or the entire house is up to you. This can help your tenant feel at home, and you can charge a fair fee for repainting the unit, even if you would have done it anyway as part of your maintenance responsibility.

6. Keep all receipts and document all repairs.

Landlording is a business, so certain maintenance projects and repairs may be tax-deductible business expenses. Make sure to keep all of your receipts and document the time you spent on repairs. Don't assume, however, that your maintenance job will be a write-off, and work closely with a tax professional to ensure you are compliant with the law.

7. Make it feel like new every time.

Before you rent out your property, think about the home you would want to live in. Every new tenant deserves a deeply cleaned, freshly painted rental. Providing a move-in ready property will help you establish yourself as a high-quality landlord. If there is carpet, have it professionally cleaned and sanitized, especially if you allow pets at your rental. Also, consider removing the carpet altogether and replacing it with a durable floor. It will make cleaning your rental easier the next time someone new moves in. And don't forget to change the locks. Kwikset smart keys allow you to do this yourself.

8. Automate where and when you can.

You may have the best tenant ever, but even the best of us forget to replace the batteries in our smoke alarms (after we remove them to get rid of that annoying beeping) or turn on the exhaust fan during a shower. Take some of the risk out of your rental property and invest in fixtures that have long battery lives, are tamper resistant or automatically turn on. Consider motion lights on the outside of your house, a programmable, lockable thermostat, a bathroom fan that automatically turns on with the lights to prevent mold, or invest in small solar lights to help light up a pathway. Some of these things may cost more at purchase, but it's your responsibility to keep your tenants and your property safe and hazard-free.

9. Know when to call a professional.

You can be as hands on (or hands off) of a landlord as you want. You just need to know when to call in a professional. At a minimum, know the location of your rental's electrical panel and gas and water shut-offs so you're ready for an emergency. Some states require that certain work such as HVAC, plumbing or electrical be completed by a licensed professional. Check with your local building authority to ensure you stay on the right side of their guidelines.

10. Have a rainy day fund.

Life happens, even to the most prepared and meticulous landlord. Something will break. There will be a leak, a flood, a fire... something. Be sure to set up a rainy day fund for maintenance and repairs. You may need to replace a large appliance or a water heater. Your tenant can't wait a week for you to transfer funds or figure out the best deal. In more serious cases, you may need to find your tenant temporary housing or fix your property before an insurance claim has gone through. Make sure your business is ready for the unexpected. Your tenant will remember (and tell their friends) how quickly you handled an emergency repair. While rental property maintenance can take up a lot of your time, it will ultimately pay dividends for your business if you prepare in advance and have a plan.

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The Future For Kenosha Landlord Association Help Keep Us Strong



The KLA Association is only as strong as our members, and the participation of our members is critical for our growth and success. We have established a number of committees (teams) to ensure that our association continues to meet our goals, retain and add members, and provide education, leadership, and representation to ensure that YOU are able to operate your rental business successfully, ethically, and responsibly. The board members and committee members have agreed to volunteer their opinions, skills, and time to make this association the best it can be. Please consider getting involved and help make a difference in YOUR association.

We are always looking for topics that you as a KLA member would like to hear about. If there is a specific topic you would like to hear more about, please send an email to kenoshalandlords@gmail.com. If you know a landlord that may be interested in joining, bring them as your guest. If there is a business that would benefit from joining, invite them as your guest.

Next Meeting

Fireside Restaurant & Lounge

2801 30th Avenue
(262) 764-0601

October 19, 2016

**6:30 p.m. networking
7:00 p.m. meeting**

*Appetizers & Beverages Provided
At Meetings*

*If you know a landlord or business
that would be interested in joining,
invite them as your guest.*

Kenosha Landlord Association

Barbara Domenk-Stasierowski

On

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