COVID CONCERNS HALT RENTAL INSPECTIONS... AGAIN

Rental inspections were discontinued temporarily as of March 16, 2020. Code enforcement staff remained out of the office until June 1, at which time they returned to a 50% furlough. The furlough remained in effect until the end of July. Rental inspections did not resume until mid-August, ramping up to full speed by early September. Unfortunately, the second wave of Coronavirus rolled in, and as of mid-November the decision to once again halt inspection of occupied units was made in an abundance of caution for staff, property owners and renters.

Exterior code enforcement activities, such as trash and nuisance violations, are continuing. Additionally, rental inspection staff will continue to perform rental inspections in vacant units and undertake exterior inspections at properties where certificates will be expiring in the coming months. A few other options are being added as well, including temporarily expanding the use of photographs (where applicable) to clear previously cited violations, the use of virtual zoom-like inspections for clearing previously cited violations and the use of a 12 MONTH TEMPORARY CONDITIONAL CERTIFICATE for properties that are expiring during the hiatus.

Property owners or managers that are eligible for one of the options above may be contacted to make arrangements, or determine if another alternative is feasible. If you think you may qualify, please contact your inspector. Additionally, owners with a vacant unit with a certificate expiring in 2021 who would like to schedule the inspection while the property is vacant, may contact the city.

Thanks to everyone for their patience and understanding as we come up with viable options for keeping the program up and running.

Questions? Email: kzoorentalprogram@kalamazoocity.org
Help Keep Kalamazoo Clean!

Call **337-8221** to report trash on the curb lawn, trash on private property or herby curby trash containers out past trash pick up day.

Call **337-8847** to report tall grass and weed violations (annually May through October).

Do You Have Vacant Units?

Housing Resources, Inc. works to find stable housing for families in need in the Kalamazoo area. Landlords who would like to place vacant units on HRI’s Available Housing List can call (269) 488-0967 for information. Landlords with properties already on the list already should update the Subsidy and Check Policy, which was mailed out last year. If you have questions please contact Valetta Sellers-Evans at (269) 488-0916.

CIVIL RIGHTS/FAIR HOUSING ORDINANCE ADOPTED

On November 30, 2020, the Chapter 18 Non-Discrimination Ordinance and Chapter 18A, Fair Housing Ordinance, were adopted by the Kalamazoo City Commission. The ordinance includes new protected classes specific to the City of Kalamazoo, as well as the creation of a citizens Civil Rights Board. The new ordinance protects renters against predatory application fees, provides protections to persons with vouchers as source of income, clarifies that it is unlawful to use anything but convictions for criminal background check and strengthens protection for survivors of domestic violence.

Fair Housing training will be provided by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and the Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan. Both organizations will be focused on Federal and State Fair Housing Law. Please keep a look out for a press release containing the dates of trainings to be given throughout the year. We strongly encourage landlords and property owners to sign up for the trainings. Additionally, City staff will be providing a video that can assist landlords and tenants by walking them through the local ordinance protections and complaint process.

The ordinances can be found by searching the City’s Code of Ordinances on [https://ecode360.com/KA2666](https://ecode360.com/KA2666) by scrolling down to Chapter 18 and Chapter 18 A. The website also offers a tab for “New Laws” where you can find a PDF version for printing. Any questions can be directed to the office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at:

deiquestions@kalamazoocity.org
Eviction Diversion Assistance Available to Tenants & Landlords

Eviction diversion is a collaborative program to help tenants pay overdue rent and stabilize their housing situation. Tenants must be no more than three months behind in rent, landlords must want the tenant to stay and the tenant must be able to sustain rent payments after assistance. Tenants may call 211 to be screened for eligibility.

The City of Kalamazoo Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Program

The City of Kalamazoo, in partnership with Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (KNHS), is removing and abating lead-based paint hazards in qualifying residential households without cost to the applicant.

According to the CDC approximately 24 million housing units have deteriorated leaded paint and elevated levels of lead-contaminated house dust and more than four million of these dwellings are homes to one or more young children. Properties built prior to 1978 that have peeling or cracking paint, most likely have lead paint chips and/or lead dust as well. Areas of specific concern are often around windows, doors, cabinets, stairways, porches and floors.

Lead-based paint chips and dust can be detrimental to a child’s health, resulting in behavior problems, learning disabilities and in extreme cases seizures or death. The toxicity of lead when absorbed in the body can also result in brain damage as well as damages to other vital organs such as the kidneys, nerves and blood.

Don’t chance the health of children. If you rent to tenants with children (or a pregnant woman) in properties built prior to 1978, and those tenants can meet eligibility requirements (low to moderate income), your property may qualify for the program. Contact KNHS today.

Be Prepared for Inspections

Believe it or not, often the rental inspection is one of the only times property owners and/or managers enter a unit for inspection. It is recommended that property owners visit properties on a regular basis and perform periodic checks of interior spaces for general conditions to identify items needing repair. It is wise to include the right to periodic inspections in the lease. It’s also a good idea to check exterior property areas for needed fixes and make repairs in advance of inspections.

Graffiti Removal Assistance Available

Property owners who have been the victim of graffiti have an avenue for help. The core neighborhood associations have supplies available to remove graffiti, including solvents for brick and masonry surfaces and wipes for glass, metal or other hard surfaces. These supplies are not suitable for painted surfaces (best handled by painting over graffiti). Residents wishing to participate and utilize the free graffiti removal supplies must sign a waiver and provide before and after photographs. Contact your neighborhood organization for more information.

Rental Registration Database

To access the rental database go to: www.kalamazoocity.org/rental and then "Rental Database Search" from the listed links to other information.
Avoid Nuisance Enforcement & Fees

Enforcement of City Ordinances may subject property owners to violation notices and subsequent cost recovery fees. Please be sure to share this information with tenants.

- **Curb Lawn Nuisances:** Discarded items, brush, and other unsightly materials that are placed in the curb lawn outside of bulk trash collection are considered a public nuisance and subject to immediate corrective action without notice. Clean-up costs are billed to the property owner of record.
- **Trash on Private Property:** Keep all litter, trash, junk and debris picked up. Property owners in violation are subject to nuisance violation notices.
- **Garbage Container Storage:** Garbage and recycling containers must be stored on private property in back of the front façade of the dwelling. Containers stored in violation of the ordinance are subject to immediate relocation which is billed to the property owner. Also, know your weekly trash pick up day and quarterly bulk trash pick up day, and only place items out for collection the day prior to scheduled pick up.
- **Junk Autos:** Any car that is not in operating condition, or is not properly licensed, is considered a junk auto. Junk autos located in the public right-of-way will be tagged by Public Safety for towing. Junk autos on private property (other than in an enclosed garage) will be provided a courtesy 10-day notice prior to being referred to Public Safety for tagging/towing.

Hot Code Topics

**Water Heaters.** New water heater installations DO require a permit. Even if you have to have an emergency installation on a weekend, make sure your contractor gets a permit and has the required inspection.

**Space Heaters:** The use of portable space heaters should be limited to emergencies. If necessary, monitor use of space heaters with extension cords and/or adaptors, both of which are significant fire hazards.

**Extension Cords:** The use of extension cords throughout a unit mean there are not enough electrical outlets. Consider adding a new circuit.

**Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** It is recommended that CO detectors are present in all units with a gas fired appliance. It may save a life!