

Landlords of Linn County

Landlords Leadership

June Vacancy Rate:
3.7% vacancy based on
3791 units represented at
meeting

New Members:
Stacie Johnson
LaPlata Development
Linda Miller
CR Property Svc

Renewals:
Richard & Nancy
McCoy
Chapel Ridge
Kathryn Hull
Pat & Rita Wieneke
Timberland Partners
KS Rentals
Lynn Hennings
High Property Management

JULY MEETING

July's meeting is on the city code changes for building inspections.

Thursday, July 9, 2009

Metro Buffet (Blairs Ferry Rd NE)

Meals must be purchased

In order to ensure room for everyone,

RSVP to 892-3056

Availability of seating on a first come first serve basis on the RSVP.

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Up Coming Meetings

August

EVICCTIONS

**Thursday
August 13, 2009
Noon**

Metro Buffet

September Meeting

**Thursday
September 10, 2009**

**12:00 Noon
Metro Buffet**

Realtor Panel

For meeting topic ideas, please email feuss99@hotmail.com. The Landlords of Linn County Board of Directors would like to hear your ideas for program topics. Meetings are typically noon-1pm on the second Thursday of every month.

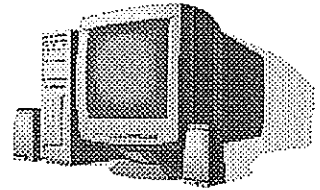
Technology Tips

As technology continues to change our world, we want to keep members up to date. There are numerous websites and software programs that have affected landlords and more are being created everyday. If there's a technology or a solution you want to know more about or have experience we want to hear about it. We'll be happy to write a review or post an update in the monthly newsletter! Please send any ideas/comments to Bob Randklev—Bob@CyberInnovation.com or call 319-533-6927.

Vendor Spotlight

Heskje Painting Specialists have been in business since 1998 and employs 9 full time painters. Heskje Painting is your full service painting specialists.

No job is too big or too small for Heskje Painting. New construction and remodeling priming and painting, staining of wood work and cabinets, painting of wood work, exterior painting and stucco and painting of concrete are just some of the jobs they tackle. Jim is also a general contractor and currently a Jumpstart contractor. They are working on several flood homes from start to finish. They can be contacted by emailing at crpainter123@yahoo.com. On the web at www.JHpaintingSP.com or by calling 319-521-



Something to Think About

Rental Housing Analysis of 2008 Police Calls:

The Gazette had the Police Department compile a list of police calls to the 100 most frequently visited addresses for 2008. This was the source of information of Adam Belz's front page Gazette Article on April 25, 2009. Dick Rehman, Board Member, has analyzed the information and has listed his observations below:

1. These 100 addresses required 10,050 different trips for the police department.
2. 2,488 trips were to 20 different rental property locations.
3. These 20 properties were managed/owned by seventeen different landlords.
4. These 17 different landlords were .4 of 1% of the approximate 4000 landlords in Cedar Rapids.
5. Seven of the 20 properties are subsidized/"Affordable Housing" properties for low-income renters.
6. The 20 properties consisted of 1312 rental units.
7. The 1312 units are 6% of the approximate 22,000 rental units in CR. However all the tenants living in these properties are not problem renters causing the need for the high number of police calls.

The facts indicate that 99% or more of the CR landlords are managing their properties so they do not require frequent police calls. Any ordinance or enforcement activity that is to be cost effective needs to be aimed at the 1% causing the problem.

CR's Crime Rate is 10 with 100 being the safest.

According to neighborhoodscount.com, there are only 10% of the cities within the US that are more violent with regards to crime than Cedar Rapids.



Tips for a quality Exterior Painting or Staining Job

PREPARATION PREPARATION PREPARATION is key!!!

In order to ensure that a painting job will last the test of time, due to the harsh conditions of Iowa weather, preparation is key. Power-washing should be done on exterior buildings or decks to remove dirt and mildew that is not always visible to the eye.

Paint will not adhere to dirt and mildew and will peel, flake or chip away, years before it should, if surfaces are not washed properly.

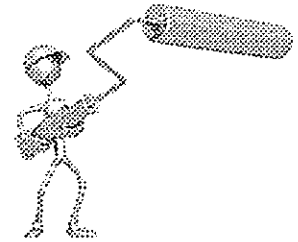
Also, a quality primer should be applied to the ENTIRE surface, and a quality paint (one with a substantial

guarantee); if the surface is prepped properly.

We believe a good paint job should last for eight to ten year or more if prepared properly. However, decks have a much shorter life (2 years or less). Both should be guaranteed by the manufacturers.

People usually feel that they can save money by purchasing cheaper materials than from a paint store. However, if quality products and preparation are used, you will save thousands by not having to paint/stain your project again for many years.

Jim Heskje, President and Owner
Jim Heskje Painting Specialist



Expense Creep it is costing you thousands!

We are amazed at the number of owners we meet and find they haven't really paid close attention to their expenses. We see owners let rents settle, property management fees creep up and utilities increase. Many owners go by each month happy they've put some money in their pocket and they say "I'm paying the mortgage down each month." They don't realize an extra \$1,000.00 in annual expenses can decrease the property value by as much as \$12,500.00.

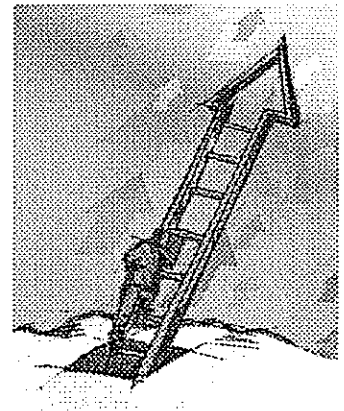
IMPROVING RETURNS IN 2009

Interest rates are near historic lows creating excellent opportunities to buy or to refinance current properties. We are seeing 6% or less loan rates with 5-10 yr balloons and 25 yr amortizations. If you don't refinance we suggest you ask yourself a couple of questions.

1. Am I earning a market rate return on my equity? If you have owned your property for a long time, you may have lots of equity but earning a low rate of return on that equity. If so, you might want to consider a 1031 Exchange as a way to increase your return.

2. If I could get an equal or better return on my investment without management and without paying taxes on a sale, would I be interested? If yes, call us and we can explain.

Information provided from MultiFamily Associates
Team@MultiFamilyAssociates.com or contact Bob Randklev, Mike Shaffer or Bob Wilkes at the Skogman Commercial Group—319-396-8286.



Service Your Air Conditioner for Summer Comfort

We all know that we can pay our auto mechanics a little now for routine service, or pay them a lot later for a major repair. The same idea holds true for your air conditioner or heat pump. If you don't service your air conditioner or heat pump regularly, you'll find yourself uncomfortable and broke.

In this article the term air conditioner will apply to a heat pump or a standard air conditioner. Both benefit equally from annual service tune-ups.

An air conditioner is a very tough piece of equipment. It is engineered to withstand all sorts of abuse and keep on running. This is great in most respects,

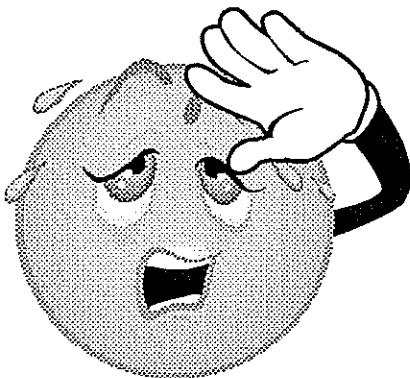
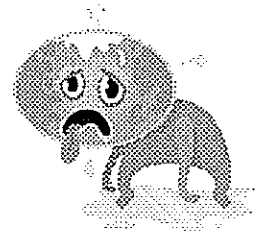
but it can lead to complacency about maintenance. Like a car, air conditioners need regular tune-ups to run properly.

Without regular maintenance an air conditioner loses about 5% of its original efficiency for each year of operation. This means that the 12 SEER unit that you bought just a few years ago may be functioning like a 9 SEER unit today! The good news is that you can recover most of that lost efficiency through regular maintenance. Studies show that with regular tune-ups a unit will maintain up to 95% of its original efficiency. This means that the cost of an annual tune-up is recovered very quickly with the savings on your monthly electric bill and reduced repair costs. A

properly serviced air conditioner will also do a better job of dehumidifying your home.

Many local air conditioning firms offer special prices at this time of year. Some even offer annual service programs that insure that you will be reminded of the need to service the unit at the beginning of the cooling and heating seasons.

The service check should include cleaning the condensing unit coils, checking the amp draw of the compressor, oiling the fan motors, checking that all the belts are well adjusted, and checking the system operating pressures and temperatures against the manufacturers specifications. One of the most important items to check is the coolant level (commonly known as Freon) in the air conditioner. A system that is only 10% low on coolant will cost about 20% more to operate! The Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) recommends that coolant levels be checked every year.



Proposed Changes to the CR Civil Rights Code:

The Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission began working with a University of Iowa law professor and a few of his students last year to rewrite our civil rights ordinance, chapter 69 of the Municipal Housing Code.

Chapter 69.19 of this code specifically covers Fair Housing. The other parts of the Civil Rights Ordinance Chapter 69 cover the administration of the city department and the commission, how the complaint process is completed, and also discrimination in employment, public accommodations (such as restaurants, stores, hotels) and credit (lending).

Several changes have been proposed, and have been approved by city's attorney and the Commission. The next step is review and approval by HUD, then back to City Council for their approval. So we are still a few months out before anything proposed becomes law.

So, what are the changes that will affect landlords? Following are the **current** federal, state and local (City of CR) protected classes that EVERY landlord should know and understand:

(These apply to **Housing** only):

Fair Housing Federally Protected Classes: (total 7)

Race, Color, Religion, National Origin, Sex, Family Status, Mental or Physical Handicap

Iowa added: (total 9)

Creed, Gender Identity

Cedar Rapids has added: (total 11)

Age, Sexual Orientation

Proposed to be added to Cedar Rapids: (would bring the total to 14 protected classes)

Marital Status, Lawful Source of Income, Gender Identity

Other areas protected besides Housing are Employment, Public Accommodation, Education and Credit (Lending) Those areas all have some or all of the above classes.

How will adding these proposed protected classes affect the way we do business as landlords? "Lawful source of income" could force all landlords participate in the Section 8 (Leased Housing) program, for example. This is currently a voluntary federal program, set up by the federal government and administered by the states and counties. Since source of income has been added in a few other areas across the country, complaints have been filed and have been found in favor of the tenant, setting precedents for the rest of us. No longer would this be a voluntary program.

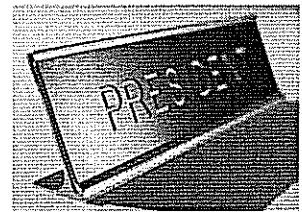
After review by the regional HUD office, there will be a public forum presented by the Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commission. This will give everyone a chance to discuss and get a good grasp on the proposed ordinance before it goes to City Council for final approval.

Landlords need to pay close attention to these developing changes, and be ready to actively voice any concerns we may have. We also will need to learn exactly what we will need to do to comply with the new ordinance. Watch for more information in future newsletters.

Laura O'Leary

Landlords of Linn County Past President

Cedar Rapids Civil Rights Commissioner



From the Desk of the President:

Crime Free Multi Housing Program

Recently there has been a great deal of discussion in the local press about crime at rental housing and licensing of landlords as a response. The increase in crime in the Cedar Rapid area is a concern for all of us. It is a community issue and requires a community response. Landlords of Linn County has suggested the Crime Free Multi-Housing program based on the recommendations of landlords in Davenport where the program has been used successfully for 10 years. The Crime Free program includes the registration of landlords and properties but is only a part of a larger program. The focus is on preventing and reducing crime by educating the community about Crime-Free Housing, screening tenants, adjusting the physical environment (locks, lighting, and landscaping), and working with community resources when there has been a crime in order to legally displace the criminal element from the neighborhood.

Collaboration continues between Cedar Rapids neighborhood organizations, Landlords, the Police Department, and the Cedar Rapids Housing Enforcement office as we work to model our program after the Davenport program. Several landlords from the Davenport area have recommended this model. The police department is guiding the dialogue in reviewing the Crime Free Multi Housing program in use in Davenport.

On May 10 and 11 the police department invited the city, the housing enforcement office, neighborhood associations, and Landlords of Linn County to send representatives to an initial training/information session presented by the Dave Rowe, Executive Director of the International Crime Free Association.

that was founded in 1998 as a way to extend the very successful Crime Free Multi-Housing Program. The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program was created in Mesa, AZ in 1992. The police department recognized the need for a safety program for rental housing. The Neighborhood Watch program was available for owner-occupied residential neighborhoods but there was not a counterpart program for rental properties. Tim Zehring took on the challenge of creating such a program. The program focuses on crime prevention and requires the cooperation of police, property managers, and residents of rental properties. City governments have gotten involved in the implementation of the program in a variety of ways from support of police department implementation to codifying aspects of the program or its use. For more information on the association and the program, visit www.crime-free-association.org.

The success of the Crime Free Programs is predicated on law enforcement and the community working together to prevent crime. Law enforcement coordinators are certified trainers of the Crime Free programs and provide training and implementation support. Property owners and managers make the commitment to learn and apply the Crime Free Programs to help keep illegal activity off their rental property. This combination of resources has shown to be successful in reducing crime and/or police calls by an average of 75%.

Implementation of the Crime Free Programs involves a three-phase process completed under the supervision of local law enforcement. The first phase is training for property managers and owners. Topics include crime prevention theory, physical security, resident screening, crime-free lease addendum, and security management. The second phase is a survey of the property looking at lock standards, exterior lighting, and landscaping. After the second stage, properties can be designated as Crime Free. The third phase is a crime free commitment. Landlords make a written commitment to screen tenants, use a crime free lease addendum, work with the police, and re-certify annually.

The program is well designed and is a community-based solution to a community-based problem. It is understood that the management practices of a minority of landlords and property management companies in Cedar Rapids contributes to the problem. We, as landlords, have a significant impact on the level of crime when we provide housing to criminals. By removing the housing for criminals when requested by the police department and by not renting to criminals or those associated with criminals, crime is reduced. As we work with the city to draft the community program we are not looking for more onerous requirements beyond what we, as good landlords, currently do. When we are asked to remove the housing opportunity for a criminal and/or their associates, clearly defined steps need to be in place. As long as we act as required and do a sufficient screening of our residents, we should not be penalized for the criminal actions of our residents or their guests. We wish to clearly define the steps we must take when action is required on our part. We should not be penalized by the actions of our residents and/or their guests. Landlords of Linn County will continue to work with the city and the police department on implementation of the program. Critical to us is how the city chooses to enforce or codify the implementation. We will continue to advocate that Landlords be involved in the management and implementation of the program.

Keith will be speaking with Beth Malicki on KCRG's *To the Point* to discuss Crime Free Multi-Housing along with Captain Walther from the police department and Adam Beltzer from *The Gazette*. Check KCRG's website for specific details about when the program will air.

Have a happy and safe holiday!

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Heaven's Best is owned and operated in Linn County by Kent VonBehren. Kent is himself a landlord and was a member of Landlords of Linn County prior to starting Heaven's Best. He's also a certified carpet cleaner, a member of the Low Moisture Carpet Cleaners Association (LMCCA), and a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. For more information, a free estimate, or a demonstration of this unique cleaning process call Kent at 393-4589 or visit www.heavensbest.com.



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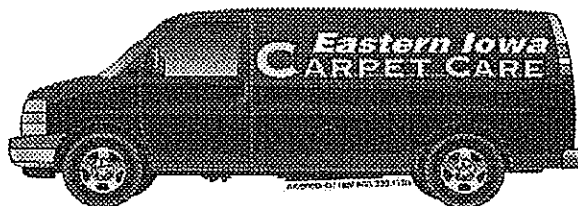
Better Built Home Enhancements

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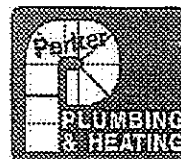
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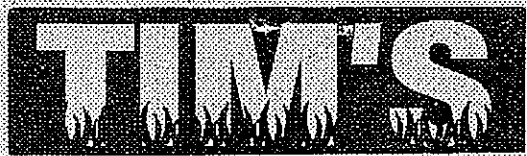
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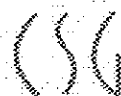
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Conservation Services Group