

Landlords of Linn County

Landlords Leadership

September Vacancy Rate:
559 Units reporting—43 vacants—7.7%

New Members:
Nationwide Office Care

Renewals:
Dynamic Broadband
Parker Plumbing
Kim & Dave Casteel
Tom & Julie O'Brien
Aldrich Properties
Cutchlow Mgmt

OCTOBER MEETING

State Convention

There is not a general membership meeting in October because of State Convention.

Clinton, IA
October 16-17, 2009
Best Western Frontier

New Information on Landlords of Linn County

New Mailing Address:
Landlords of Linn County
PMB 338
3315 Williams Blvd SW, Suite 2
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

Visit us on Facebook:
Group:
Landlords of Linn County
Landlords of Iowa

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Up Coming Meetings

November Meeting

Thursday
November 12, 2009
12:00
Metro Buffet

Topic
TBD

December Meeting

Holiday Party

Thursday
December 10, 2009
6:00 p.m.
Biaggi's

Information enclosed

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.

Plumbing Reminders—Parker Plumbing

Something to remind your tenants of:

Plumbers get more calls to open clogged drains than for any other service. Many such calls could be prevented by greater care in the use of drains. The most-used drain is the one in the kitchen and that is the drain most often clogged.

Preventing this situation can be done by carefully watching what is emptied into the sink drain and by the regular use of safe biodegradable waste digester.

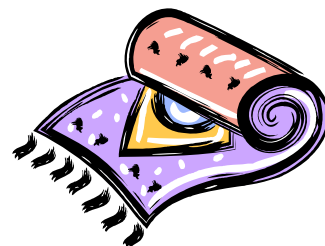
Sink stoppages are usually caused by liquid fats, emulsified by warm dishwater and carried through the pipes. The water cools as it proceeds to the main sewer and leaves the fatty deposits along the way. A film of grease forms on the pipe wall, then another and another. Coffee grounds and bits of food add to this accumulation layer until the pipe becomes impassable.

Pour excess grease into a tin can and throw it out with the garbage, not down the sink drain. When using a food disposer, always let sufficient cold water run to carry the particles down and into the main line to prevent buildup in the smaller waste



Fiber Types Continued:

Polyester yarns have come a long way from the early days. Newer developments include the manufacturing of PET polyester fibers from recycled soft drink bottles. These are ground up and made into the fiber that makes the carpet. The newest yarn system on the market is Smart Strand created by DuPont, the Stainmaster folks, and Mohawk Carpet Company. Smart Strand is one of the most environmentally friendly man made carpet fibers on the market today. By using the sugar found in corn, DuPont has created one of Sorona's key ingredients from [renewable resources instead of natural resources](#). That is why every seven yards of SmartStrand made with DuPont Sorona renewably sourced polymer saves enough energy and resources to equal the equivalent of one gallon of gasoline. In addition to being environmentally friendly these products are able to withstand the everyday use and abuse that your carpet takes. Stains from Red Wine, Kool-Aid, coffee, or even mustard are a thing of the past. And unlike Nylon carpet these products do not need a topical treatment to resist those stains.



Breaking news! The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has determined that fibers made from PTT, the latest polymer innovation from [DuPont](#), offer a unique combination of attributes which merit a new generic name, triexta. PTT polymer sold for the manufacture of triexta for apparel and flooring applications is sold under the DuPont™ Sorona® brand.

Facebook members, see Randy's Carpets Page to keep up to date on all the latest news. Also if you have any questions concerning flooring in your properties, home or office, post them on our discussion page and our team of experts will provide the guidance you need!

We have a great selection of carpets made from Smart Strand yarn at Randy's Carpets, 5454 Center Point Rd. Call Russ Seaver at 393-1400 for a no obligation consultation and estimate for your flooring needs.

Provided by: Randy's Carpets and Russ Seaver.

From the Desk of the President:

Keith Smith

Landlord Convention

If you haven't registered yet for the 2009 Landlords of Iowa State Convention in Clinton now is the time to do so. The convention opens on Thursday, October 15 with registration and hospitality. Featured speakers on Friday, October 16 and Saturday, October 17 include officers from the Clinton and Davenport Police Departments, Landlords of Iowa state board members, Landlords of Iowa lobbyist, and two national landlord gurus, Mike Butler and Jeffrey Taylor. These are dynamic and interesting speakers. And, as always, one of the most important aspects of the convention is the networking and discussion that goes on between landlords. Sign up now to reserve your opportunity to dialogue with other landlords and property managers and to hear a fantastic slate of speakers.

Local Concerns

Work continues on the **Crime-Free Housing Program**. A local program is being drafted and interest remains high. As new information becomes available it will be shared with our membership.

Campaigning for Cedar Rapids City Council seats and mayor will soon be moving into full swing. Members are encouraged to stay informed and ask questions. Landlords have some of the best locations for **campaign yard signs**. I've had a number of candidates ask for names of members who have property on high traffic streets. When the candidates come knocking on your door this is a good time to ask what they will do to support residential landlords. It is a great time to build rapport so after the candidate is elected you can then call on them to help advocate for any issues that may come up while they are in office. We won't endorse any particular candidate but we do encourage you to get involved. Your involvement now can make a big difference for the future.

Legislation Watch

On May 15, 2009, Rep. Henry A. Waxman and Rep. Edward J. Markey introduced H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, which was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee and eight other committees in the House of Representatives. On June 26, 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES), also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill or Cap-and-Trade, with a vote of 219-212. Read H.R. 2454 in its entirety at http://energycommerce.house.gov/Press_111/20090623/hr2454_rulesfiled.pdf. The US Senate is currently considering the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. ACES covers a wide range of energy and environmental issues. Of particular interest are sections 202 and 204.

Section 202, Building Retrofit Program: Establishes a program under which the Administrator of EPA, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, supports development of standards and processes for retrofitting existing residential and nonresidential buildings. Authorizes the Secretary of Energy to provide funding to states to conduct cost-effective building retrofits, using local governments, other agencies or entities to carry out the work, through flexible forms of financial assistance up to 50% of the costs of retrofits, with funding increasing in proportion to efficiency achievement. Also supports retrofits of historic buildings.

This section led to amendments and new bills such as HR 1778 the Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance Program (REEP). An aspect of REEP means that homeowners could be required to retrofit their homes to meet federal "green" guidelines in order to sell their homes. If the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 becomes law the EPA Administrator shall develop and implement, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, standards for a national energy and environmental building retrofit policy for single-family and multi-family residences. The bill allows states to contract with private agencies to oversee the retrofitting and measuring of improved efficiency and environmental friendliness of houses and other buildings. The goal is to make sure that private citizens have a variety of choices for retrofitting their homes and have a competitive choice among qualified auditors, raters, contractors, and providers of services related to retrofits. Individual homeowners would be allowed to retrofit buildings themselves.

Section 204, Building Energy Performance Labeling Program: Establishes an EPA program to develop procedures to label buildings for their energy performance characteristics, using building type and consumption data to be developed by the Energy Information Administration. The program would be implemented by states in a manner suited to increasing public knowledge of building energy performance without hindering real estate transactions.

As part of the labeling program the Administrator of the EPA shall create requirements to apply to both residential and commercial properties. The labeling program will enable and encourage knowledge about building energy performance of both owners and occupants, and inform efforts to reduce energy consumption nationwide. As noted above, the states are to implement the program. The label is to be structured so that the information is available to owners, lenders, tenants, occupants, or other relevant parties that can utilize the information.



This is a time to be informed and ask questions of our senators and representatives. What are the implications of this bill? Financial assistance up to 50% of costs is offered. Where does that money come from? How will it be administered? What are the requirements to qualify? What are the requirements for documenting costs (think FEMA and flood recovery)? What about the other 50%—how do homeowners and residential landlords come up with that money? Without clear answers about funding for this legislation we can't support this bill.

Contact our representative at <http://loeb sack.house.gov/Contact> and Iowa's senators at <http://grassley.senate.gov/contact.cfm> and <http://harkin.senate.gov/c/office.cfm>. Please share your point of view regarding this legislation. They need to hear from as many voices as possible to shape their position on this topic.

Fall/Winter Maintenance—Keith Smith

As we move into fall and winter it is time to think about winterizing your properties. Refer to your lease agreements to determine responsibility for items. Are tenants of single-family homes responsible for winterizing the property in which they reside? Do they remember this? Do they know how? Too often the tenant's copy of the lease agreement ends up in a drawer or file folder not to be looked at again until there is a problem.

Take action now to send a reminder and instructions for caring for the property in cold weather. Some items are easy such as disconnecting water hoses and making sure outside faucets are in good condition and shut off (and while this may be obvious to you, tenants may not have experienced this). Are there pipes or faucets that need special care? Do the residents know where the water shut-offs are if they are needed? Suggest tips for saving energy such as covering window air conditioners and checking for air leaks around doors and windows. If you do not wish to have plastic placed over windows, make this clear to tenants now, before they are tempted by cold temperatures. Are there "extra" vehicles on the premises that will make snow removal a challenge? Who is responsible for having the furnace checked? Has the furnace filter been changed? For multi-family buildings, is your de-icing supply ready? Do you have a broom or shovel available to tenants for clearing the front step in between shovelings? Are your railings solidly in place? Are trip/slip hazards removed or remedied?

Also think about your own maintenance equipment and supplies. Where do you store your paint? Do you need to move it from a summer location to a warmer winter location? Remember to winterize your power washer, mower, and trimmer. Schedule now for blade sharpening or tune ups to be ready for spring.

This is also a great time to consider implementing annual or biannual inspections if you don't already do so. Regular inspections often catch issues, which tenants have not reported, before they cause greater damage. Scheduled inspections also help to prepare for city inspections. They also convey to tenants that you are a "good" manager and keep up the property.

You may wish to check the following to ensure they are in good and safe working order:

- Faucets / Sinks / Sink Traps
- Water Supply Valves
- Toilets
- Exhaust Fans
- Smoke Detectors / Fire Extinguishers
- Stove/Range, Refrigerator, Dishwasher and Disposal
- Range Hoods
- Furnace & Filters
- Electrical Outlets / Light Switches
- Light Fixtures / Light Bulbs
- Windows/Screens
- Doors
- Walls



Tenants can prepare for the inspections by removing items from under the bathroom and kitchen sinks and in front of the furnace closet. If tenants are aware of an issue but have not yet reported it, this is an opportunity to discuss it. Inspections are also an opportunity to enforce removal of items from the furnace closet and trash and debris from the common areas of the building

Regular inspections can build rapport with tenants and protect your property. Catching a small drip before it becomes a leak that damages wood and drywall makes the investment in time and staff worthwhile. Regularly changing furnace filters and smoke detector batteries (as a safety net if tenants have not done so) can make a difference in machine performance and safety. Inspections can also aide in maintaining accurate records. When a tenant calls about a refrigerator or range not working you can check inspection reports to note if this is an appliance you had on the "watch" list because it was older. It may make the process of diagnosing and/or ordering parts easier if you have listed model and serial number in your records.

Implementing a process of inspections, condition tracking, and winterizing take time but make good business sense as well as help protect your investment. Please bring a winterizing or inspection tip to share at the upcoming Landlords of Linn County meeting.

Smoke Detector Update:

Keith Smith

From the recent press release: The State Fire Marshal is delaying the start date for the new residential smoke detector requirements. This October, all new construction homes were to be outfitted with dual sensor smoke detectors. However, due to lack of supply from manufacturers, this new requirement is being delayed six months. The major smoke detector manufacturers have assured the State Fire Marshal they will have an adequate supply of product on store shelves within six months.

Effective April 1, 2010, all newly constructed residential properties in the State of Iowa must be equipped with smoke detectors that have both photoelectric and ionization sensors. In general, the term “residential properties,” refers to houses, hotels, motels, dormitories and apartments. Existing residential properties do not need to have existing detectors changed out if they meet the manufacturer’s recommendations for use, installation and life expectancy. **However, after April 1, 2010, when it is time to replace smoke detectors in existing residential properties, they must be replaced with the dual sensor (photoelectric and ionization) detectors.**

Consumer Reports provides the following definitions of smoke alarm types: Smoke alarms use two types of sensors—ionization and photoelectric. Ionization sensors are better at detecting small particles that are typically present in fast, flaming fires, such as burning paper or fires started with an accelerant. Photoelectric sensors are more sensitive to large particles typically found in smoldering fires, such as those that start in a couch or bed. Dual-detection alarms combine ionization and photoelectric technologies. Smoke alarms have a limited life and should be replaced every 10 years.

As noted in the press release from the state fire marshal’s office, a limited number of dual-sensor detectors are currently available. If you installed dual-sensor detectors in the recent months be aware of a recall from the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Kidde Model PI2000 Dual Sensor Smoke Alarms with date codes 2008 Aug.01 through 2009 May 04 have been recalled. Kidde has received two reported incidents of smoke alarm malfunctions involving electrostatic discharge during installation. No injuries have been reported. The alarms can be identified by two buttons, “HUSH” and “PUSH AND HOLD TO TEST WEEKLY,” which are located on the front/center of the alarm. The model number and date code are on the back of the smoke alarm. The alarms were sold at retail, department, and hardware stores and through electrical distributors nationwide from August 2008 through May 2009 for between \$30 and \$40. Consumers should contact Kidde immediately to receive a free replacement smoke alarm.

Plan ahead for replacement of smoke detectors; know how old the installed detectors are and when they will need replaced. Put a schedule and budget together. While we hope they are never needed, smoke detectors are definitely a necessary expense of doing business.

Kirk’s Corner:

Reminders for fall:

1. Remove hoses from outside faucets so they do not freeze and break.
2. Remove hoses from sump pump discharge so they do not freeze and break.
3. Good time to get boiler inspections before the heating season. Parker Plumbing is offering a boiler clean and check service for \$89.00 per building for the month of October (normally \$105.00). Call today: 378-9888

Provided by Parker Plumbing.

Vendor Highlight—X-Wires



X-Wires Broadband is a leading provider of managed internet and TV services for multi-family properties nationwide. The X-Wires service increases the value of properties, improves CAP rates, and can help occupancy. This service isn’t only good for property owners, it’s also good for tenants. The average tenant can save \$250 or more per year by having X-Wires service included in the rent (even with a property owner markup) over purchasing the services themselves.

X-Wires serves over 10,000 users nationally from its headquarters in Cedar Rapids, giving local property managers the capabilities of a big company but the service of a local vendor. X-Wires was the 2007 Communications Company of the Year as awarded by the Technology Association of Iowa.

Please feel free to use X-Wires as a resource if you ever have any technology questions or if you would like a free quote for servicing your properties. You may contact Carl Hirschman at 515-321-3161, carl@xwires.net, or visit www.xwires.net for more information.

STAYING AHEAD OF THE BANDWIDTH CURVE

For properties providing high-speed internet service to their residents as an amenity, it may seem overwhelming to determine how much bandwidth is enough. The number of bandwidth hoarding devices that your residents use will keep growing and is not likely to slow down anytime soon.

Let's get acquainted with a few of the internet devices that your residents may be using this year:

The release of the iPhone nearly two years ago and its increase in popularity over the last year has changed the way people view and use cellular phones. The iPhone allows users to make and receive calls, as well as check email, create and watch or download photos, audio and video. These incredible features require bandwidth – a lot of it! In fact, some have referred to the iPhone as the “Hummer of cell phones” comparing it to the gas guzzling SUV.

Gaming systems have been around for years, but they are also constantly evolving and over the last few years the prevalence of online gaming has increased and has become very popular. Not surprisingly, given the nature of cutting-edge video games, amazing graphics and a variety of gaming systems, online gaming also requires a lot of bandwidth.

Another bandwidth hog revolves around television and movie viewing. Devices such as TiVo and Netflix may rely on internet streaming to deliver content. This offers a better viewing experience for the user, but requires a larger amount of bandwidth to deliver television programs and movies. As we continue to see movies and television programs moving toward high definition formats, the size of the files that are streaming will grow exponentially and require more bandwidth.

So how do you keep up with the increasing need for bandwidth on your properties?

A recent article in *Broadband Properties* called “Meeting the MDU Bandwidth Challenge” took a close look at what property managers can do to stay ahead of the bandwidth curve. The authors, Chris Bowman and David Daugherty said this, “Keeping residents happy over the long haul requires a managed service environment where the flow of information is unimpeded from the property broadband demarcation point all the way to residents’ MAC-enabled edge devices, such as computers and Blackberries. Managed services include 24x7x365 knowledgeable support as well as a mature infrastructure incorporating both standard design practices and the machine intelligence required to deal automatically with a wide variety of congestion-causing malware and resident practices.” They go on to talk about the unquestionable need for managed services that help handle bandwidth traffic and will allow for expansion as your residents’ bandwidth needs grow.

It's impossible to see into the future to predict what the next internet device will be and how much bandwidth it will require. But making well-informed choices about your property's internet service and network now will make all the difference as bandwidth needs increase and new devices flood the market. Managed services that give you the ability to expand and grow with technology, 24x7x365 customer service and a customized solution that fits your property are the key components necessary to ensure that your property will be able to provide a high-quality internet service to your tenants and easily keep up with technology.



http://www.bbpmag.com/2009issues/may-june09/BBP_MayJune09_MDUBandwidth.pdf

Cedar Rapids Assisted Housing: “I Didn’t Know That!”

A recent telephone call to the Cedar Rapids Housing Services Office prompted staff to want to share some “basics” about the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The caller, a local property manager, wanted to have her apartments referred to families on the rent assistance program. In the conversation she had assumed that the vast majority of the families served by the program were larger families. When told that almost half of the families served were one person households, her response, “I didn’t know that!” It was this response, and the fact that your tax dollars support the program, which made Assisted Housing think others might be interested in the following:

1. What family sizes are currently on the program? **45% of the households are single persons and 89% of the households have 4 persons or less.**
2. How long are families usually on this program? **Since the year 2000 a family remains on the program for an average of 3.6 years.**
3. Where are the families coming from that participate on this program? **93% from Cedar Rapids and / or Iowa, 4.8% from Illinois, and 2.4% from other states.**
4. Where are program participants living in the metro area? **316 – SW, 302 – NE, 185- SE, 108 – Marion, 82 – NW, and 30 – Hiawatha. Since our service area includes both Linn and Benton Counties the remaining families are in those locations.**
5. What are the incomes of families now being served? **90% of those households have annual in-**

comes of \$20,000 or less.

6. What is the average share of rent the family pays per month and the average share the City pays per month? **\$201.00 is the average share the family pays per month and \$319.00 is the average the City pays per month.**

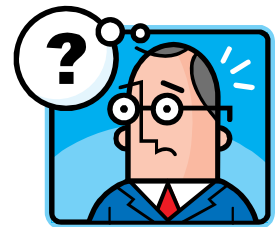
7. How much money, through housing assistance payments, does Assisted Housing pay out to local landlords? **In 2008 \$4.4 million was paid to area landlords.**

8. Can families on the rent assistance program become homeowners? **Assisted Housing has a Homeownership component and so far in 2009 3 families have closed on homes.**

9. What does the Family Self-Sufficiency Program do for participating families? **It moves families from federal and state assistance programs to greater independence or self-sufficiency. During 2008 13 families transitioned from welfare to work and no longer receive welfare benefits.**

So how many families went off the program as a result of Family Self-Sufficiency? **In 2008 10 families stopped receiving rent assistance due to increased earned income.**

Well, now you know. If there are any other questions or comments, please don’t hesitate to contact Assisted Housing at 286-5872.



*Questions or concerns,
contact Housing
Services*



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Lobbyist	Joe Kelly		joe@iamha.org

Landlord University 2009

Landlord University is coming to Linn County again.

Join us for our 2nd Annual Landlord University on
Saturday, November 14, 2009. More details to follow.

Support Our Vendor Members

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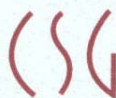
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