

FINAL DELIVERABLE

Title Policy Recommendations for Improving
Rental Housing Conditions in Keokuk, Iowa

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Public Policy & Persuasion

Instructor Carrie Schuettpelz

Community Partners Keokuk Chamber of Commerce,
City of Keokuk

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Policy Memorandum

Date: December 10, 2019
To: Casey Barnes, Code Enforcement and Housing Official - Keokuk, IA
From: Madeline Bridges, Haley Edwards, Harry Whittenburg-Nelsen, Kasey Dresser, and Rita Tewolde
Cc: Shelley Oltmans, Executive Director Keokuk Chamber of Commerce, Professor Carrie Schuettpelz, the University of Iowa
Re: How to Address the Rental Housing Problem in Keokuk
Appendix: Charts and work cited

SUMMARY

Keokuk has no formal registration process for landlords and rental units. Without this, there is no guaranteed uniformity in what a standard rental unit may provide in Keokuk. Modernizing the city's practices regarding rental properties is in the best interest of landlords, tenants and the community of Keokuk. The following steps are necessary to ensure that Keokuk's rental stock remains viable for years to come:

- Establish landlord and rental property registration,
- Mandate formal housing inspections,
- Educate tenants on their rental rights.

These processes will benefit all involved parties by creating a straightforward approach to regulating rental properties. The City of Keokuk will greatly benefit from increased organization, information, and monitoring as a result of these recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Keokuk's housing stock is aging, with 58.3 percent of rental units in Lee County built in the 1970's (Comprehensive Housing Needs). Without a formal housing inspection process, many of these units risk falling into disrepair due to age and lack of maintenance. Presently, there is no codified regulations ensuring that landlords maintain their property to a set standard. Requiring certain standards are met would ensure a baseline of tenant safety throughout Keokuk. In the present state, Keokuk has no system of registering and contacting landlords. If a landlord is an absentee landlord, it can oftentimes be hard to contact them when there is a maintenance need. These issues have bogged down the resources of Keokuk's city government, and it is critical that new guidelines are established for the long term good of the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Create Requirements to Rent Property
 - Mandate rental permits through municipal code
 - Required before tenant moves in
 - Application will include: Owner, property manager, property information, proof of lease and housing inspection, and statement of agreement

- Best practice: City of DeKalb- explicitly asks if owner lives in the county (Figure 1)
 - Permit application renewed every time a new tenant moves in or with every three year housing inspection
 - Establish best enforcement policies for City of Keokuk
 - Burlington: \$50 fine, if without rental permit
 - DeKalb: \$300 fine per property everyday the violation persists
- ❖ Implement a Proactive Rental Inspection Program (“A Guide to”)
 - Require rental inspections as a component for a rental permit,
 - Renewal schedule at a minimum every three-four years
 - Allow city-approved private contractors administer inspections,
 - Use monetary penalties, permit revocation, and rental escrow accounts as enforcement measures to be administered by housing officials
- ❖ Educate Tenants about their Rental Rights
 - Create a flyer to disburse to community members (Figure 2)
 - Distribute flyers through mass mailing. Information to include: complaint charges, documentation requirements, tenant rights, seminar information
 - Review DeKalb’s landlord-tenant booklet for flyer ideas
 - Hold a quarterly seminar to educate current and potential tenants
 - Contact and train volunteers to host seminars
 - Create information packet containing program plans to be provided to seminar leaders
 - Review the University of Iowa's tenant-education program (University of Iowa)
 - Advertise seminar using flyers, local businesses, or local newspaper

NEXT STEPS

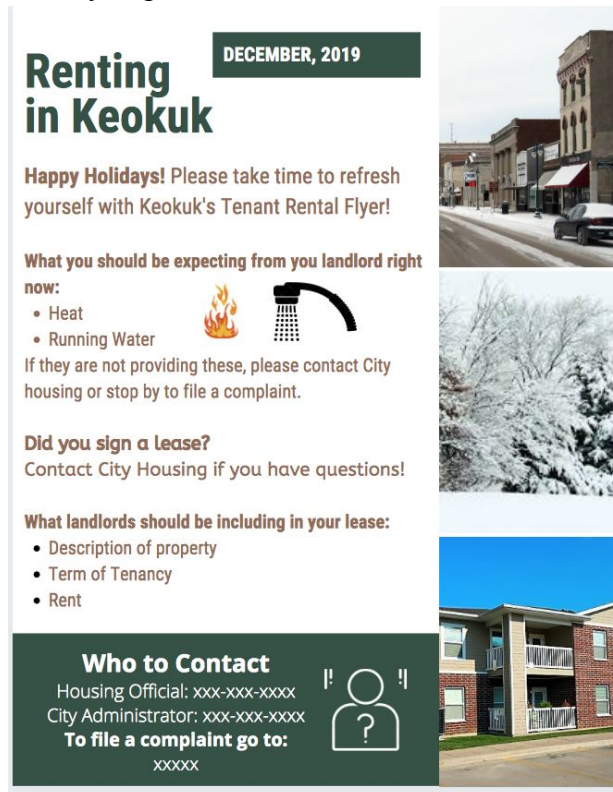
1. **Establish a committee** that will oversee the implementation of a Rental Housing Program;
 - a. Committee members should include the Keokuk Housing Official and/or Community Development Director, elected-official(s), and Building & Housing Advisory Board member(s),
 - b. Committee members should determine program needs, goals, and a timeline for implementation.
2. **Consult** the City Attorney, Chief of Police, and Keokuk Housing Authority to gather department-specific perspectives on implementing rental permits and inspections;
 - a. Examine municipal ordinance best practices and select a model after which to draft Keokuk’s city ordinance.

APPENDIX

Figure 1: The application specifically asks if the owner lives in or outside of DeKalb county. If out of county, the landlord is required to hire a property manager.

5. Does the owner reside within DeKalb County? Yes No
<i>If not, designate an Agent (above 18 years of age) Who Resides in DeKalb County and is Authorized to Receive Process for any Legal Proceedings on Behalf of this Property.</i>
Name _____
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip-Code _____
Telephone _____ E-mail: _____
6. Does the owner personally manage the property? Yes No
<i>If not, who manages the property?</i>
Name _____
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip-Code _____
Telephone _____ E-mail: _____

Figure 2: Example of potential tenant education flyer made using Canva. Canva is a free online design tool with the opportunity to print in black and white as well.



Works Cited

“A Guide to Proactive Rental Inspection Programs,” ChangeLab Solutions (2014).

http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Proactive-Rental-Inspection-Programs_Guide_FINAL_20140204.pdf

Comprehensive Housing Needs Analysis for Lee County, Iowa. Retrieved December 8, 2019, from ICON.

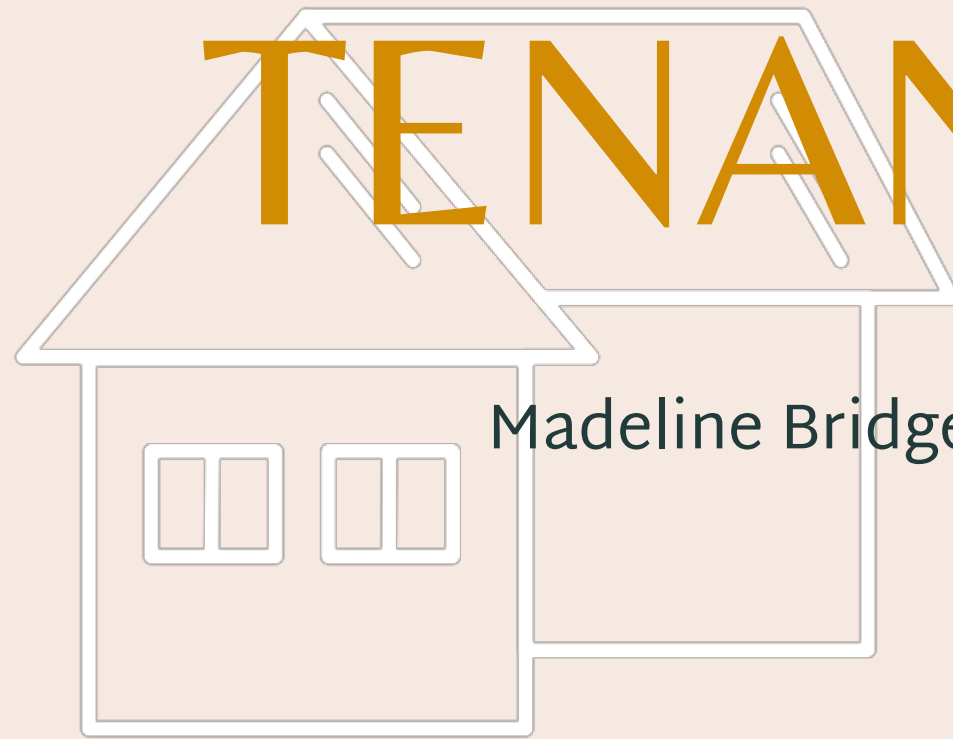
University of Iowa: Tenant Information.

<https://offcampushousing.uiowa.edu/resource/iowa/?p=tenant>.

RENTAL HOUSING REGULATIONS

&

TENANT EDUCATION



Madeline Bridges, Haley Edwards, Harry Whittenburg-Nelsen, Rita
Tewolde, and Kasey Dresser

BACKGROUND

of

346

available rental
units in Lee
County...

... only

6

show up on the
front page of
Google

3,689

rental units in
Lee County

58.3%

of units were
built before 1970

<10%

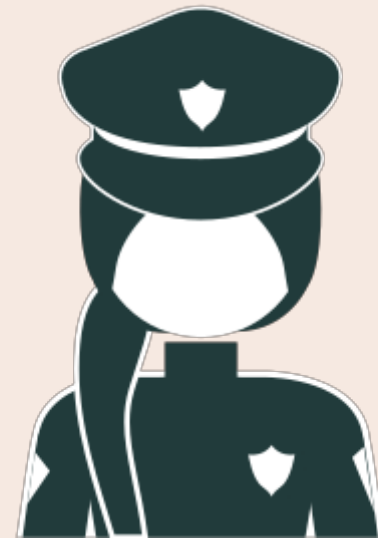
of units were
built after 2000

THE CURRENT PROBLEM



NO INSPECTIONS

No minimum standard
for rentals



NO ENFORCEMENT

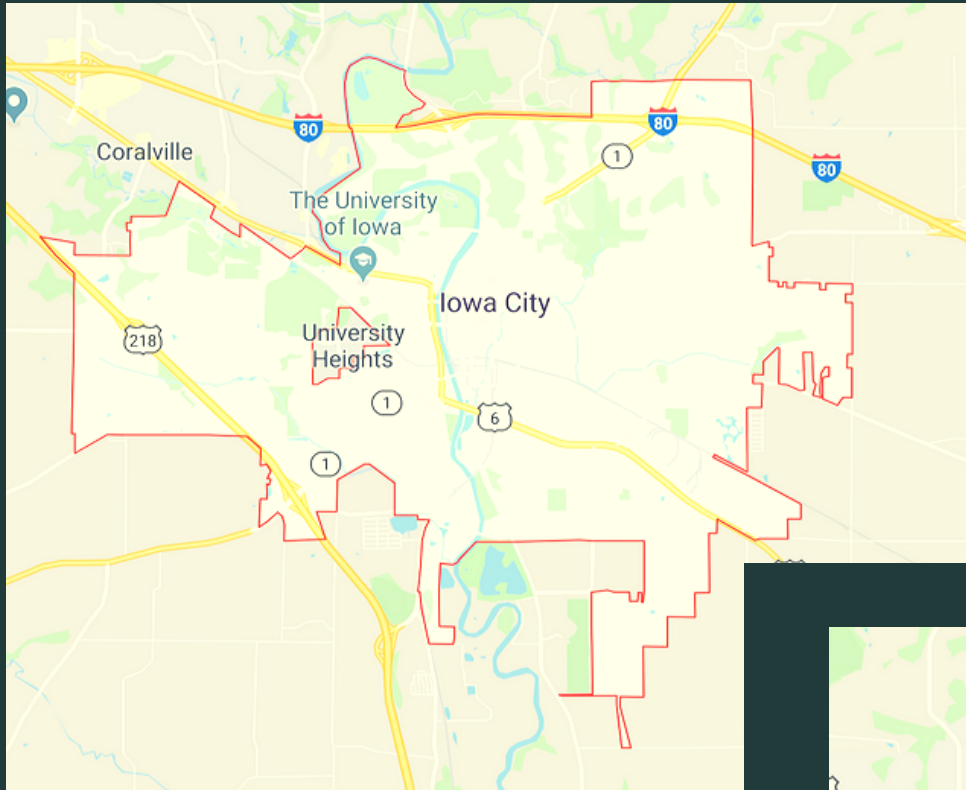
Landlords are not registered
with city, making it hard
to contact them



NO LEASES

Both landlords and tenants
left vulnerable

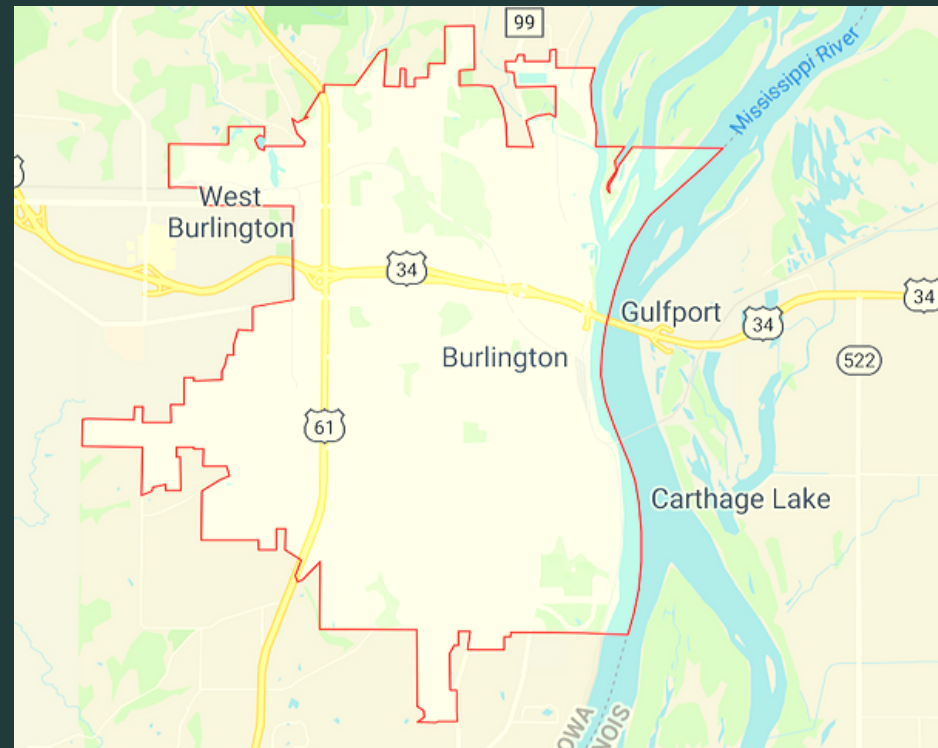
BEST PRACTICES



IOWA CITY, IA - THE UNIVERISTY OF IOWA

Population: 75,798

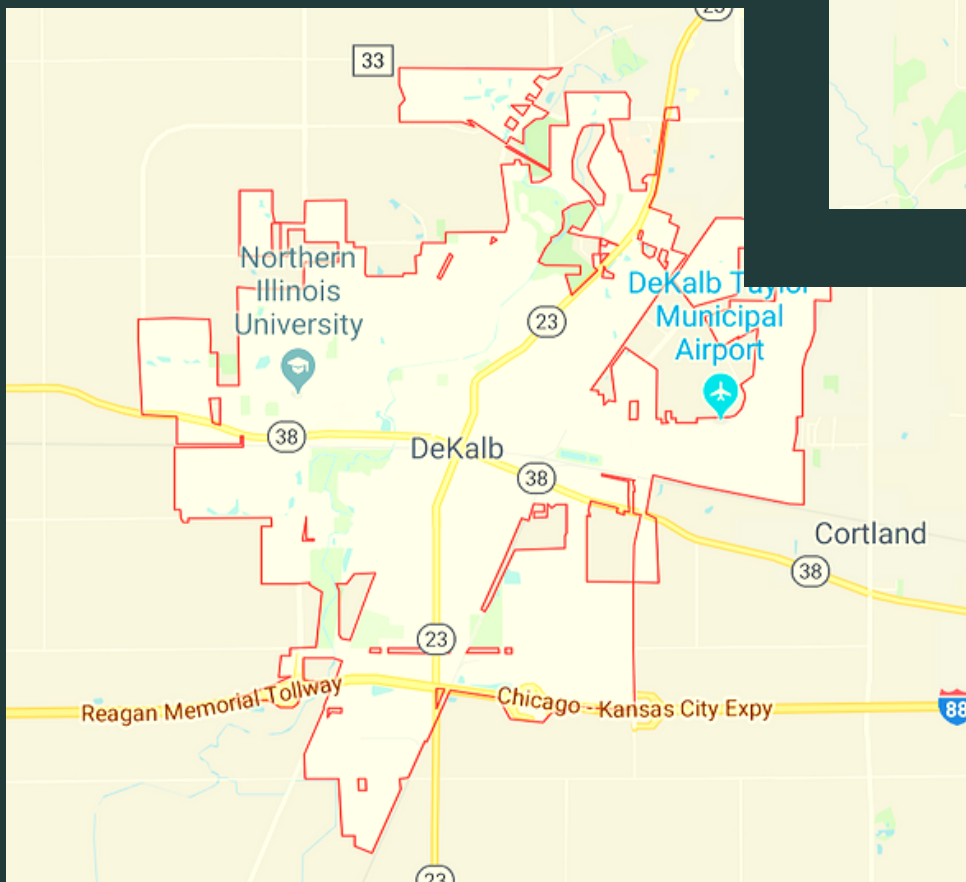
Tenant Education



BURLINGTON | OSKALOOSA | FORT MADISON

Population: 25,022 | 11,54 | 10,520

Inspections



DEKALB, IL

Population: 43,193

Regulations and Availability

BURLINGTON

DEKALB

FORT
MADISON

OSKALOOSA

WRITTEN
LEASE
AGREEMENTS



RENTAL
PERMITS



RENTAL
INSPECTION
PROGRAM

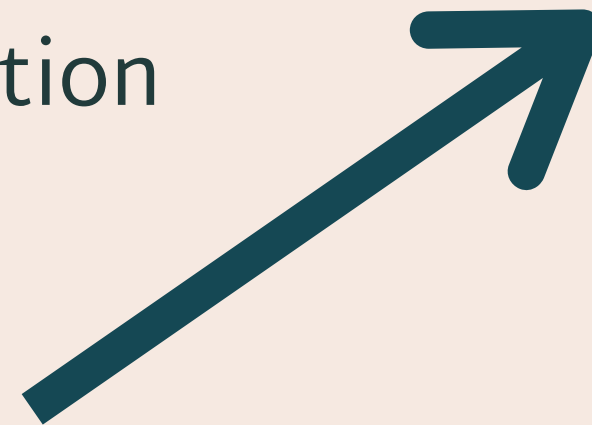


Recommendation #1

CREATE REQUIREMENTS TO RENT PROPERTY

RENTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS:

- ✓ Owner information
- ✓ Property manager information
- ✓ Property information
- ✓ Proof of written lease
- ✓ Proof of inspection



Approved or
denied by the housing official

ENFORCEMENTS:

Burlington: \$50 fine

DeKalb: \$300 fine per property
every day violation persists

Recommendation #2

IMPLEMENT A PROACTIVE RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

REGISTRATION

- Inspection requirement for rental permits

INSPECTION

- Private contracting
- Schedule
- Checklist

ENFORCEMENT

- Order to Repair, Correct and Comply
- Penalties, rental permit revocation, rental escrow account



Recommendation #3

EDUCATE AND ENGAGE TENANTS

- ✓ **CREATE FLYER TO OUTLINE TENANT RIGHTS**
 - Disburse by mass mailing
- ✓ **CREATE PUBLIC SEMINARS TO EDUCATE COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
 - Held in public buildings
- ✓ **PUT LEASE OUTLINES ON THE CITY OF KEOKUK WEBSTE**



Example Housing Education Flyer

Stakeholders

TENANTS

At risk of exploitation by landlords



Protected by stricter landlord regulations and education program

LANDLORDS

Property not protected by rental leases; property loses value



Benefit from tenant's knowing their responsibilities

KEOKUK CITY OFFICIALS

Cannot assess affordable housing needs or conditions



Provided with access to rental data and revenue from rental permits

COMMUNITY

Lacking affordable and quality rental housing, has low property values and unsafe buildings



Improved rental housing supply, property values and safety

NEXT STEPS



ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE

Oversee rental housing program



CONSULT WITH CITY OFFICIALS

Assess municipal ordinance best practices

Works Cited

A Guide to Proactive Rental Inspection Programs," ChangeLab Solutions (2014).

[http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Proactive-Rental-Inspection Programs_Guide_FINAL_20140204.pdf](http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Proactive-Rental-Inspection%20Programs_Guide_FINAL_20140204.pdf)

Burlington, Iowa: Rental Housing

<https://www.burlingtoniowa.org/2207/Rental-Housing>

City of DeKalb: Code Compliance

<https://www.cityofdekalb.com/1146/Code-Compliance>

City of DeKalb: Rental Permit Application

<https://www.cityofdekalb.com/DocumentCenter/View/3463/NEW-Landlord-Registration-of-Rental-Units-revised-3-23-16?bidId=>

City of Fort Madison, Iowa, Municipal Codebook

https://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=854

City of Oskaloosa, Iowa: Rental Housing Inspection Program

<https://www.oskaloosaiowa.org/461/Rental-Housing-Inspection-Program>

Fort Madison Residential Rental Housing Inspection Program.

<https://www.fortmadison-ia.com/index.aspx?NID=359>

Keokuk Comprehensive Plan (2018)

Landlord-Tenant Regulations Handbook. (2019, July 8).

<https://www.cityofdekalb.com/DocumentCenter/View/118/Chapter-10-Landlord-Tenant-Regulations-PDF?bidId=>

University of Iowa: Tenant Information.

<https://offcampushousing.uiowa.edu/resource/iowa/?p=tenant>.

How to Address the Rental Housing Problem in Keokuk

Madeline Bridges, Haley Edwards, Harry Whittenburg-Nelsen,
Kasey Dresser, and Rita Tewolde | The University of Iowa

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What is the Problem?

The City of Keokuk, Iowa currently lacks formal regulatory oversight of rental properties and tenant-landlord relations. There is no formal registration with the city to become a landlord, allowing landlords to rent out deteriorating units with no written lease agreement or oversight by the local government. The result is a deteriorating housing stock and a lack of affordable rental units in Keokuk, which is detrimental to many low-income tenants. According to Keokuk Housing Official, Casey Barnes, there is no reliable count of how many housing units are being rented or are available to rent. The most accurate measurement across Lee County estimated that there were 3,689 housing units occupied by renters, with 348 available for rent (Lee County DDM). Without an accurate assessment of the rental housing stock, officials cannot estimate the need for affordable housing, tenants lose the ability to assess the availability of housing units, and landlords do not have a comparison of other units.

Declining home prices in Keokuk have allowed for landlords to purchase properties at relatively low cost, and with no regulation to ensure rental units are safe to occupy. The result has been an increasing number of decaying houses that do not meet standards for habitation. The lack of control and action by the city has allowed for landlords to continue renting their units in disrepair. Without formal regulation of these units in place, Keokuk has had no way to ensure the maintenance or control of units being rented, leaving tenants vulnerable to poor landlord practices.

The Solution

The goal of this report is to provide recommendations that will help better the current status of rental housing in Keokuk. Recommendations to the City of Keokuk outlined in this report include; setting requirements to rent property, implementing a proactive rental inspection program, and creating a tenant-education program.

Stakeholders include Keokuk tenants, landlords, city officials, and the community at-large. These recommendations will affect these groups in distinct ways. With the responsibility of assessing the

quantity and quality of rentals being shifted to landlords through the implementation of rental permits and regular housing inspections, city officials will have more influx of valuable information at their disposal and can make further policy decisions about the availability of affordable housing, future zoning practices and actions taken with former rental housing found to be unsafe to occupy. Keokuk itself stands to make financial gains as well as see general structural improvements throughout local neighborhoods with the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. As for tenant's stakes in the issue, housing units that are being utilized as rentals in Keokuk are not formally inspected, creating potentially unsafe living conditions for tenants.

With the implementation of rental permits, inspections, and a tenant education program, the community of Keokuk should see a boost in the quality of housing available to renters as landlords are now financially accountable for the conditions of their properties. Additionally, as properties are kept in better condition, property values in several neighborhoods will begin to rise, positively affecting homeowners. Lastly, with further incentive to maintain rental units, tenants will be living in safer conditions which is a step toward a safer community overall.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Requirements to Rent Property

To ensure oversight of the rental process by local government, we recommend implementing mandated rental permits for landlords wanting to rent property in the City of Keokuk. This will help regulate the available rental properties in the area, make sure tenants are living in safe, comfortable housing, and seek to decrease the number of abandoned houses in the area.

DeKalb, Illinois is a crucial city to reference in terms of best practices due to their extensive written code relating to landlord-tenant relationships. There is an entire chapter in the DeKalb municipal code with twenty sections covering the application process, tenants' rights, rental agreements, and other important information. Specifically, they mandate written leases. While this may not be a norm in every

city, it will benefit the City of Keokuk to add structure and government oversight to the current housing situation. An application process ensures the city understands the most recent status of the house in case situations with abandoned property or squatters ensue.

After a landlord purchases a property they wish to rent, they need to have an approved housing application prior to the tenants moving in. This application will include information about the property, owner, property manager, and proof of a lease and housing inspection. Information about the property can include lot size, zoning, number of dwelling units on property, number of bedrooms, garage, driving, parking, or any supplemental materials. These requirements were taken from the DeKalb and Cedar Falls, Iowa rental permit applications (Figure 1). The owner's information should include contact information and their residence, explicitly noting whether they live in or out of the county. The property manager's information should also include their contact information and personal residence address.

A proof of a written lease is critical since there is currently no regulation regarding tenants' relationship with their landlord. A lease is an important legal document that adds structure to the rental process and protects the tenants, landlords, and city. While the city cannot regulate exactly what the lease states, they should provide lease templates on the website that would be ideal for the city, including specific language and suggesting yearlong leases. The initial housing inspection will be paid for by the landlord (more information regarding annual inspections will be available in the next recommendation). A valid certificate from an accredited housing inspector will ensure the house is safe to occupy.

The application to rent property should be available online and in hard copy and turned in electronically or in-person. The rental permit application should be updated every time a new tenant moves in and every time the city requires the three-year housing inspection, if the same tenants have remained. If a landlord must go through the rental application process less frequently with long-term tenants, this will incentivize the landlord to find tenants that plan to stay at their property long term.

Once the application has been turned in, housing officials or other appointed personnel, can approve or deny said applications. Applications that have been denied may be given a period to fix any discrepancies or issues. Approved applications should be organized and filed in a city database, both electronically and in hard copy.

At the end of each application in DeKalb they have an important agreement before the signature of the landlord:

Statement: I hereby state that the above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge; I acknowledge receipt of a copy of Chapter 10, “Landlord-Tenant Regulations” of the Municipal Code; and, I agree to notify the City of DeKalb within ten (10) days of any changes to this information

This is significant in the sense that the landlord understands the commitment they are making as such to rent property in the City of Keokuk.

As this becomes more established, there are also ways to expand the rental permit process. DeKalb, Burlington, Fort Madison and Oskaloosa all have an application fee for their rental permit application. This can become a source of revenue for the city. We decided against putting this in the current recommendation in efforts to maintain the landlords currently in the area. With these new changes and the required financial aspect of a housing inspection, it may be an important compromise as current landlords are already putting in additional work. Also, in the future, the city can more closely regulate the number of people living inside each housing structure to be sure it meets housing code. The application should already include the number of bedrooms. This is something the housing official can undertake as more top priority items become resolved.

Recommendation 2: Implement a Proactive Rental Inspection Program

The City of Keokuk must implement a proactive rental inspection (PRI) program (“A Guide to”). With proactive rental inspections, the city institutes a program for periodic inspections of rental

properties to ensure that they are meeting city determined standards for habitation. Looking to the programs administered in other cities may provide Keokuk officials with the best start to understanding the variations a rental inspection programs can take (Figure 2). There is no standard rental inspection program. Officials will need to build a program around the specific needs and goals of the Keokuk community. Currently, as there is no rental permit or inspection program in Keokuk, a rudimentary program structure is outlined in this recommendation. A basic program will allow the city to begin inspections quickly and feasibly using the current financial resources and manpower available to the city. Eventually, once an initial program has been implemented and evaluated, the program should be revised to meet more extensive goals.

The City of Keokuk must make inspections a prerequisite to obtain and hold a rental permit upon the implementation of a rental permit program. Making inspections a component of rental permit registration will reduce some of the administrative burden on the city as landlords will be expected to provide the city with proof of inspection or else be faced with penalties for noncompliance. A Certificate of Inspection shall be provided to the City Housing Official with rental permit applications, and rental permit renewals should be contingent passed on the ability to provide a new Certificate of Inspection.

The City of Keokuk must implement an inspection schedule (Oskaloosa: Admin Policy, 3). A three-year baseline schedule is recommended. Inspections will also be required whenever a rental permit is due for renewal. To benefit compliant landlords, if no violations are found at the initial housing inspection it is recommended that the inspection schedule be extended to four years. Properties that require multiple inspections to reach compliance should face annual inspections. Such an inspection schedule will encourage landlord's initial compliance with housing code as well as allow the city to pinpoint and focus monitoring efforts on troublesome properties. A rental permit program will provide the city with a registry of rental properties. It will be the duty of program administrators to monitor the

re-inspection deadlines of rental properties and notify landlords thirty days before an re-inspection deadline.

At the beginning stages of a Keokuk PRI program, inspections should be conducted by city-approved private contractors (Oskaloosa: Admin. Policy, 4). Again, the intention is for this to reduce the administrative burden on housing officials as a program is being introduced. The responsibility will be on landlords to schedule inspections and payments should be made directly to the company. A city-provided inspection checklist shall be the standard landlords and private contractors will be expected to follow. At minimum, the inspection checklist should outline the current housing standards as stated in the Keokuk Housing Code. A “Certificate of Inspection” should be provided to the city both by the landlord and private contractor. If a violation is reported, the program administrator should serve the landlord with an “Order to Repair, Correct, and Comply”, and re-inspection should be required within 30 days (Figure 3). Monetary penalties, rental permit revocation, and rental escrow accounts (“A Guide to,” 18) are enforcement options for program administrators to consider and decide upon. Appeal procedures should be provided for landlords and should be overseen by the Building Advisory and Appeals Board.

The recommendations outlined are a starting point for a Keokuk proactive rental inspection program.

Recommendation 3: Create a Tenant-Education Program

In order to ensure that the previous recommendations are effective, and landlords are held accountable, Keokuk must implement a program to educate current and potential tenants about their rental rights. This should include creating concise flyer outlining basic tenant information and rights, as well as eventually hosting public seminars led by knowledgeable volunteers. When looking to create a

tenant education program for Keokuk, best practices from The University of Iowa and DeKalb, Illinois provide valuable information that can be followed for the Keokuk community.

First, a concise flyer should be created to inform current and potential tenants about their rights, what they should expect and receive from landlords, and how to file a complaint. For example, the University of Iowa's education program website (University of Iowa) highlights areas including illegal lease provisions, discrimination, things to know before signing a lease, and tips for finding an apartment. These sections are similar to Keokuk's overarching problem of tenants being unsure of their rights, including; if they will face punishment from the landlord for filing a complaint, unfair charges from landlords, documentation requirements for the lease, and overall expectations for their rental. These following areas should be included in the flyer, with two-to-five bullet points under each to concisely answer the concern. Topics included in the flyer should later be expanded on in the City of Keokuk website following a similar format to University of Iowa tenant information website. To disburse this flyer, a mass-mailing to Keokuk residences is recommended every six months, as it will reach all residents promptly and inform patrons at the same time. The estimated cost for a mass mailing is \$0.19 per flyer for 200 or more prints (Lesko, 2018). This does not include ink and printing prices. As for formatting, the flyer should be one-page front and back, in readable 14-point font, include graphics if necessary, have a well-highlighted section including numbers to call and offices to visit with questions, and include seminar dates and locations (Figure 4).

An example of best practices found in DeKalb, Illinois is the city's "Landlord-Tenant Handbook." The handbook is required to be readily available in all landlord rental offices, the City of DeKalb office, and city website (Landlord-Tenant, 2019). Since Keokuk has many landlords that are not present in the city, and therefore do not have rental offices, the City of Keokuk should require landlords to send the last available flyer to new tenants promptly. Keokuk may want to create a small handbook similar to DeKalb's best practices at a later date. First, to reach a wide audience and due to the added

challenges of a booklet, a simple flyer is suggested. With respect to the flyer, Keokuk should look at DeKalb's booklet for ideas of what to include. Altogether, the flyer will be a simple way to reach the community and provide tenants with the knowledge necessary to make informed rental decisions. Second, Keokuk housing officials should eventually move towards creating public seminars to inform current and potential tenants once regulations have been established and funds are available. The seminar will be taught by a volunteer who is approved and/or educated by a housing program administrator. Volunteers should be given an outline to conduct the seminar, which is to be created by city officials. The recommended community members to lead the seminars include the owner of Peevler Real Estate, knowledgeable community tenants, landlords of good-standing, and employees of the public library. If there is a lack of volunteers to teach the seminar, employees of the public library should be appointed to conduct the seminars until further notice. Seminars will be taught in Keokuk Public buildings, preferably the Public Library, twice yearly for 30 minutes each with two separate times available in one evening. To give a comparison, the University of Iowa currently hosts tenant education seminars taught by Student Legal Services (University of Iowa). To get participants, the University advertises using student emails, flyers, signs, and free food. Keokuk could follow this approach of advertising by promoting the seminar in the flyer sent by mass mailing, local newspaper, and/or disbursing small posters to local companies in downtown Keokuk one to three weeks before the seminar. These seminars will give Keokuk tenants more information and the chance to ask questions in a casual and welcoming environment.

Additional Considerations

As Keokuk begins to regulate the rental housing practices within its communities, city officials will need to consider the pushback they might receive from landlords in creating and enforcing a policy change as well as estimated costs for each of three recommendations set forth in this report. It should be expected that landlords will be resistant to being required to follow regulations to continue renting their

properties to tenants and, thus, Keokuk must be prepared to illustrate that the new regulations will protect and serve landlords as well. The requirement of a written lease can protect the landlord from damage to the property by tenants. Additionally, with the implementation of regular housing inspections, the upkeep of rental properties will become more commonplace, increasing property values across Keokuk.

Keokuk officials must consider both the financial cost associated with creating and implementing the aforementioned recommendations and the time required to do so. The financial impact of implementing this report's recommendations should be minimal, considering the involvement of existing city officials and best-practice-based modeling rather than novel program creation. In terms of time considerations, Oskaloosa recommended their staff spend 10-12 hours per week over an eight-month period on the implementation of their housing inspections program (City of Oskaloosa). However, because the City of Keokuk is recommended to also introduce a rental permit system, the timelines would likely need to be extended over the course of one year. Dependent on the parties involved, this timeline may be adjusted as the project continues to develop. As the project becomes established, these hours and costs will ideally be gained back in the newfound efficiency and accuracy of the rental housing system in Keokuk as well as the revenue the city is taking in from aforementioned fees.

Conclusion

In the coming months, Keokuk must create requirements to rent property, implement a proactive rental inspection program, and educate tenants about their rental rights to gain control over their current problems regarding rental inspections and tenant rights. The issue taking place in Keokuk is not unique, and thus, neither is the solution. While making use of the local best practices outlined in this report, the City of Keokuk should assess which actions it would prefer to take and make strides toward carrying out regulations proposed here. If the current absence of regulations and requirements in rental housing

continues, the vulnerability of both landlords, tenants, city officials and the community at large will persist. In order to attract newcomers and provide adequate living conditions for their current residents, Keokuk must ensure that individuals have quality, affordable rental housing available.

Appendix

Figure 1: The application specifically asks if the owner lives in or outside of DeKalb county. If out of county, the landlord is required to hire a property manager.

5. Does the owner reside within DeKalb County? Yes No
<i>If not, designate an Agent (above 18 years of age) Who Resides in DeKalb County and is Authorized to Receive Process for any Legal Proceedings on Behalf of this Property.</i>
Name _____
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip-Code _____
Telephone _____ E-mail: _____
6. Does the owner personally manage the property? Yes No
<i>If not, who manages the property?</i>
Name _____
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip-Code _____
Telephone _____ E-mail: _____

Figure 2: A chart to provide a general overview of the regulatory structures of DeKalb, IL, Burlington, IA, Fort Madison, IA, and Oskaloosa, IA

	Burlington	DeKalb	Fort Madison	Oskaloosa
Ordinance mandating written lease		Yes	-	-
Rental permit requirements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of Rental Units form • Crime Free Lease Addendum • Landlord educational program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration form • Acknowledgment of tenant responsibility form • Self-certification of inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration form • Rental Certificate of Compliance (inspection)
Rental permit fees		\$50/building \$15.24/unit if over 2 units	Annual registration fee: \$25/property and \$5/add. Rental unit	\$15/unit/year
Ordinance mandating inspections of rental properties	Yes	-	Yes	Yes

Inspection program	City-employed “Rental/nuisance inspector” 3-year inspections for multiple dwelling units 5-year inspections for single-family rental dwellings Compliance within 60 days Revocation of permit/order to vacate within 30 days	End of lease inspection -recommended not mandated Code Compliance Inspectors “sidewalk inspections”	Self-certification required annually with follow-up by the City Full inspection required every 3 years 30 days to reach compliance (with fee upon reinspection)	Contracted out: Iowa Inspections, LLC Every 3 years Four years for compliant landlords Every year for properties that require two or more inspections
Inspection fees	Fee schedule dependent on unit size (fee range from \$135-\$450)			\$75 first unit & \$25/add. Unit (paid directly to LLC)
Penalties	Reinspection fee \$55 + \$5/unit Standard penalty fee (General Code Provisions)	\$50 fee if lease is not given to tenant \$50 fee for late registration \$300 penalty/day if property is not registered \$250 noncompliance penalty for crime addendum	\$300 non-compliance penalty General penalty fee (General Code Provisions)	Unregistered properties: \$50/day late fee Noncompliance within 60 days – municipal infraction (General Code Provisions)

Figure 3: “Order To Repair, Correct and Comply” form found in the Burlington Housing Code (161.05 Sect. 7)

ORDER TO REPAIR, CORRECT AND COMPLY
 To: _____, Owner (and Tenant if applicable)
 Re: _____, Premises in Violation

You are hereby notified that the Code Official has determined that the above premises has the following violations of the Burlington Housing Code:

Code Section	Description of Violation	Location of Premises
—	—	—
—	—	—
—	—	—

You are hereby ordered to repair, correct and comply with the requirements of the Housing Code within sixty (60) days of your receipt of this order. Failure to comply with this order (or as it may be modified on appeal) will result in a denial or revocation of your rental permit and an order to vacate the premises.

You are advised that this order may be appealed by filing a written notice of appeal, containing the reasons for the appeal, with the Housing Appeals Board, City Hall, Burlington, Iowa, within fifteen (15) days of your receipt hereof. The appeal may dispute the above code violations or request additional time allowed for compliance or both. In addition, you may request that the Board grant a variance in the application of the Housing Code to your particular circumstances. Failure to file a timely appeal results in waiver of your right to have this order modified.

You are further advised that your failure to comply with this order (or as it may be modified on appeal) constitutes a municipal infraction per [Chapter 4](#) of the City Code.

Figure 4: Example of potential tenant education flyer made using Canva. Canva is a free online design tool with capabilities to print in black and white as well.



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