



City of Waterloo, IA
Waterloo IA, 50703



Date: May 7, 2021

To: City of Waterloo, Iowa

From: Hiatt Holman, Kadel Coakley, Oscar Rodriguez, Claire Kelly, Jane Holish

Cc: Mayor Quentin Hart, Department of Human Services - Housing Authority

Re: Creating a landlord manual for Waterloo, Iowa

INTRODUCTION

The City of Waterloo, Iowa, lacks a well-defined document laying out proper guidance for its many landlords and tenants.

SUMMARY

Our group, working under the auspices of the University of Iowa, has been assigned the task of creating a 'landlord manual' which will showcase all of the relevant information regarding the rental process within the city of Waterloo. It will include guidance on the ethical and legal obligations of both landlords and tenants, various sample documents (lease agreements, inspection forms), and explanations of innovative rental practices.

STAKEHOLDERS

The following groups are a partial list of the important stakeholders who may be affected by the creation, and or potential use, of a landlord manual.

- **Waterloo Landlords**
Landlords within Waterloo may be feeling lost in the ethical and legal obligations they have towards their tenants. The creation of a proper landlord manual would bring them peace-of-mind, in regard to their confusion surrounding the rental process.
- **Waterloo Tenants**
New and/or pre-existing tenants within Waterloo may not fully understand their obligations to their landlords, nor their legal rights when confronted with a dispute. A clear landlord manual would offer them guidance towards understanding these issues.
- **Waterloo City Government**
Waterloo city officials may be overwhelmed with the task of mitigating disputes and solving issues concerning landlords and tenants within the city. By creating and establishing a proper landlord manual, it may prevent these issues from arising as both parties would have a better understanding of their roles and obligations.

BEST PRACTICES

To draw inspiration for our own landlord manual, our group looked to other cities who had already created a similar document.

- **Seattle Landlord Manual**
This manual was created in 2017 and offers extremely clear and concise information regarding the rules and regulations of landlords within the City of Seattle, Washington.
- **Fort Collins Landlord Manual**
This manual offers intuitive directions and guidance for both landlords and tenants. They utilize a FAQ section, which is an extremely helpful tool for any potential users.
- **Burlington Landlord Manual**
This manual offers easily digestible information surrounding the rental process for both landlords and tenants. Being that this manual can be found online, they make great use of hyper-links so users can reach relevant laws and city-codes on other websites.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Creation and use of a landlord manual**
This landlord manual is focused on four different sections, including: landlord guidance, tenant guidance, sample documents, and innovative practices. The first section, landlord guidance, would lay out information related to the process of starting out as a landlord, understanding relevant expectations, and interpreting various legal regulations. The second section, tenant guidance, would offer information focused on explaining obligations tenants have towards landlords, important remedies for when rental disputes occur, and the legal rights of tenants within Waterloo. The third section, sample documents, would showcase important rental documents that both landlords and tenants utilize, so potential users of this manual would have a well-informed understanding of how this paperwork should look when signing a lease, making an addendum, or solving a dispute. Finally, the last section of the manual, innovative practices, will go in-depth on how other cities provide supplementary guidance to both landlords and tenants.
- **Implementation of innovative practices**
The cities of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, both offer landlord training programs that would be extremely useful for landlords within the city of Waterloo. These classes offer education on topics like: housing safety standards, tenant screening tips, and evictions. By providing a landlord manual and these supplementary classes, our group believes the city of Waterloo would create a much more stable and equitable rental environment.

NEXT STEPS

- Translate the landlord manual into various languages to allow for more accessibility to various populations within Waterloo.
- Publish the manual on the Waterloo city website so landlords and tenants can use it as a helpful resource.

Begin to formulate a plan to create a landlord training class similar to the programs in Cedar Rapids and Milwaukee.