

## **Residential Apartment Renewal -- Best Practices for Ann Arbor Landlords**

Prepared for review of the Ann Arbor Renters Commission, January 19, 2023

To alleviate stress and create more equity in rental housing access, the Ann Arbor City Council instituted a new ordinance that places restrictions on when landlords can sign leases in occupied apartments and when they can show apartments to prospective tenants. This ordinance, informally referred to as Right to Renew, is a step in the right direction. However, correcting Ann Arbor's leasing timeline necessitates collective effort from multiple stakeholders, including landlords, the City of Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan, and renters themselves. Noncompliance from any one of these groups will stymie efforts and protect inequity and inaccessibility in rental housing.

The Renters' Commission is committed to providing stakeholders in the Ann Arbor community with a set of best practices so that they can make sure that they are complying with both the letter and spirit of the new ordinance.

### **Landlords**

*As the Renters' Commission, we are encouraging all Ann Arbor landlords to abide by the following best practices for handling lease renewals.*

- Begin showing units for leases that begin in May in December of the previous year
- Begin showing units for leases that begin in August in March
- Establish dates when you will conduct showings and renewals and make those dates visible on your website
- Commit to a legal renewal policy that is visible on your website
- Inform newly signed tenants of their renewal rights upon signing a lease by way of providing a physical copy of the most updated ordinance language and through verbal explanation.
- Do not keep formal waitlists for prospective tenants
- Do not charge fees, refundable or nonrefundable, to hold an apartment that may not be available for leasing
- Do not keep informal waitlists based on communication received from tenants seeking an apartment lease before the dates listed above
- Prioritize current tenants for renewal unless there is a just cause for non-renewal
- Ask current tenants about renewal one month before you will start showings and provide 30 days for the tenants to respond
- Do not sign leases until the legal date
- Do not ask prospective tenants to sign until the legal date

### **City of Ann Arbor**

*As the Renters' Commission, we are encouraging the City Administrator, the City Attorney, and the City Council to abide by the following best practices for handling lease renewals.*

- Send postcards to all Ann Arbor landlords that alert them of the new law and that lists the best practices for landlords (above)

- Send postcards to rental addresses announcing and explaining the right to renew ordinance and best practices for landlords and renters
- Send best practices for landlords (above) to all landlords owning and leasing rental housing in Ann Arbor, and landlord associations such as the Washtenaw Area Apartment Association
- Audit Ann Arbor's largest landlords that cater to students to assess compliance with renewal laws
- Audit landlords who have received complaints to assess compliance with renewal laws
- Send warning letters to landlords who are suspected of violating the letter and spirit of renewal laws
- Process complaints swiftly
- Publish aggregated information about complaints and violations
- Revise complaint form to allow tenants to properly fill it out
- Produce a yearly compliance report for the first five years of that the ordinance is in effect or until compliance is conventional among a majority of Ann Arbor landlords

### **University of Michigan Housing**

*As the Renters' Commission, we are encouraging University of Michigan Housing to abide by the following best practices for handling lease renewals.*

- Disallow lease renewals for on-campus housing to be signed before April (for Fall leases)
- Communicate renewal laws and best practices clearly to all incoming students through Beyond the Diag and other channels
- Do not advertise or provide a platform for landlords to advertise off-campus housing for Fall leases until March
- Keep a public list of landlords that keep waitlists or have engaged in other predatory tactics on the Beyond the Diag website
- Eliminate pay structure for off-campus housing advertisements that is currently in place on the University of Michigan off-campus housing website

### **Renters**

*As the Renters' Commission, we are encouraging Ann Arbor renters to abide by the following best practices for handling lease renewals.*

- Familiarize yourself with your rights related to renewal by visiting this webpage: <https://offcampus.umich.edu/article/early-leasing-and-right-renew-city-ordinances#:~:text=The%20Right%20to%20Renew%20Ordinance.renew%20to%20the%20current%20tenant.>
- Do not sign onto a waitlist or reservation list
- Do not pay to add your name to a waitlist or reservation list
- Do not sign leases with landlords who are known to violate renewal laws and best practices
- If you suspect that your landlord has violated your rights, file a complaint with the City of Ann Arbor:

<https://www.a2gov.org/departments/build-rent-inspect/housing/SiteAssets/Pages/Filing-Complaints/Leasing%20Ordinance%20Complaint.pdf>

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