VERY IMPORTANT STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU SIGN THE LEASE

CONFUSED ABOUT RENTING?
Below you’ll find a crash course in Renting 101. A little cramming before you go apartment hunting can make your rental experience almost hassle free.

INSPECT THE DWELLING, BEFORE YOU SIGN THE LEASE.
This will insure that you don’t get any nasty surprises when you move in.

Talk to the current tenants, if possible, to get an idea of any problems connected with living there. They can also provide information on utility expenses.

BE SURE THE PROPERTY IS LICENSED BY THE CITY. Ask to see the license, and find out the legal occupancy of the unit. If too many people are living there, tickets may be written and tenants required to move out. To check the license, call 779-5105.

ASK HOW MANY PARKING SPACES ARE AVAILABLE. Not all apartments provide a space for each occupant, and some provide no parking at all. Remember, lawn parking and overnight street parking are both prohibited by City ordinance.

READ THE LEASE THOROUGHLY. If a promise isn’t in the lease or part of a signed agreement, the landlord doesn’t have to keep it.

FIND OUT WHOSE NAME THE UTILITIES WILL BE IN AND HOW THE BILLS WILL BE SPLIT. Some houses with multiple apartments have only one meter and one thermostat, leaving tenants to work out who controls the thermostat and how utilities will be split among the occupants.
FIND OUT WHAT METHOD OF TRASH DISPOSAL WILL BE USED and who is responsible for the cost. For information, call 779-5302.

ASK THE LANDLORD FOR AN INVENTORY CHECKLIST IF HE DOESN’T PROVIDE ONE. Fill it out and return it within 7 days after you move in, and keep a copy until you get your security deposit notice after you vacate. Document big problems with photographs. If something is broken when you move in but not noted on your inventory checklist, you will probably be charged for it when you move out.

BE SURE YOU PROVIDE A FORWARDING ADDRESS WITHIN 4 DAYS OF YOUR MOVE-OUT DATE, so mail can be sent directly to you. Your landlord must return the unclaimed portion of your security deposit within 30 days after you vacate. If he keeps part of your deposit, he must send you a list of damages. If you dispute his claims, you must respond within 7 days.

WONDERING WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE LEASE?

Leases may use different terms, but all should include:

- The name, address, and signature of the landlord.
- The name(s) and signature(s) of the tenant(s).
- The amount of rent to be paid, how frequently, and when.
- A description of or location of the premises to be rented.
- The starting and ending dates.
- The amount of the security deposit, if any, and any additional fees to be paid.
- The name and address of the bank holding the security deposit.
- Notice that the tenant must supply a forwarding address to the landlord in writing within 4 days of terminating the lease.
Definition of who is responsible for paying utilities.

Definition of who is responsible for maintenance, including snow removal and lawn cutting.

Any other agreements the landlord and tenant may want to make.

**WHAT ARE THE TENANT’S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

The City’s Housing Licensing Code holds tenants responsible for helping the landlord maintain the property, as follows:

- Let the owner know, in writing, of any condition in the house which might be unsafe, unhealthy, or illegal.
- Keep the dwelling and yard area clean, and dispose of trash properly.
- Do not sublet or overoccupy the property.
- Park only in the designated parking area—not in yard areas or across sidewalks.
- Comply with the City’s nuisance party ordinance.
- Keep indoor furniture and appliances indoors—not on the porch or in the yard.

**WHAT ARE THE LANDLORD’S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

- Provide the tenant with a clean, healthful, and safe dwelling unit.
- Maintain the dwelling and its area in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition.
- Provide a parking area that complies with the Zoning Ordinance.
- Comply with the provisions of the City’s Housing Licensing Ordinance.

**WHAT ABOUT MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS?**

Maintenance problems can be anything from a leaky faucet to an emergency such as a gas leak or a defective furnace. In each case, tenants should contact the landlord and ask that the problem be corrected within a certain period of time, depending on how bad it is. Staff at the City Department of Building Safety or Fire Marshal’s office can provide information about the responsibilities of both landlords and tenants in rental units. They can also help to decide if the problem requires immediate attention. Check the Planning