



City of Lawrence

**Communications Plan for
Rental Licensing & Inspection Program
Initial Implementation: April-December 2014**

Communications Objective

To effectively and efficiently provide communications materials to a variety of stakeholders including tenants, landlords, property managers, apartment complex management and the general public. The city's goal is to ensure that all persons renting (leasing/subleasing/letting) units in the city have a habitable and safe place to live. The city seeks to ensure that rental properties comply with applicable building, land/development, fire and property maintenance codes.

Assumptions

This communications plan assumes there are three distinct communication efforts which must occur: communication to those residing in a rental unit, those managing a rental unit and the general public. Staff will focus first priority on educating landlords/property managers/apartment complex owners about the inspection program and timeline then will develop communication pieces for education of tenants and their rights/responsibilities as part of the rental licensing program.

Listing of All Audiences to be Included

- Rental property owners/landlords/property managers
- Rental tenants
- Neighborhood groups
- Residents of Lawrence
- University of Kansas/Haskell Indian Nations University students living off-campus
- Parents of University of Kansas/ Haskell Indian Nations University students living off-campus
- General public

Messages

Priority 1: Messages to Landlords/property managers/apartment complexes

- The city has a strong desire to partner with landlords/owners to educate tenants and other landlords about this program to encourage safe rental housing options in Lawrence.
- All rental units in the city will be a part of a city Rental Licensing and Inspection Program as of January 1, 2015
- Owners must submit an application to obtain a license on an annual basis with initial inspections required and then follow-up inspections scheduled on a cyclical basis (either 3 or 6 year cycle). The cycle followed for the inspection process will be determined based on rental condition at the time of inspection.
- Tenants may file complaints about rental structures which could trigger an inspection.
- A fee for licensing is required and ranges from \$14 to \$17 per unit, depending on the number of units licensed by a single owner or entity. Additionally, there is a \$50 inspection fee for each unit inspected. Additional fees may be required if deemed necessary through the inspection process.
- During an inspection, the city will have 27 areas of inspection under review (in common areas and exterior premises). The city will also inspect and note violations to the city's Property Maintenance Code but these violations will not affect the unit's ability to receive a rental license.
- An extensive FAQ document is available for examples on when and how many units will be inspected based on ownership and number of violations found.
- The city will work with the licensee to perform inspections in the most efficient manner possible and will coordinate multiple inspections to complete the licensing process for an entity in a timely manner.
- Inspections are not required in the months of July and August when rental properties experience high turnover and leasing changes unless the property owner requests the inspection at that time.
- The owner will be notified of violations verbally with the inspector at the time of inspection will be shared via mail or e-mail.
- Landlords/owners will be given 30 days to correct violations found and may receive an extension if necessary due to weather or availability of contractors to fix issues. If an immediate need is found, the city may require correction in less than 30 days.
- If the owner/landlord disagrees with the city's inspection findings, there is a process to appeal the findings.
- Failure to comply with the city's Rental Licensing and Inspection Program may be prosecuted in Municipal Court.

- Landlords/owners are not required to post the inspection in the rental unit but the license must be maintained by the licensee and available to the tenant upon request.
- Every September, the city will mail a postcard to each licensed dwelling with general information about the Rental Licensing and Inspection Program.
- The city will use the website, www.lawrenceks.org/pds/rental-licensing as its primary point for information about the city's program.

Priority 2: Messages to tenants

- Inspections on rental properties will be coordinated with the owner/licensee of the property – the owner will contact the tenant with information on inspection dates/times. The owner does not have a legal requirement to receive consent from the tenant.
- The city's inspector generally will not take video/photo recordings of an inspection unless the inspector feels there are extreme life/safety issues or immediate hazards existing, or where compliance by the owner or tenant is not making progress on a known inspection issue.
- Tenants can be cited for a violation if it is determined that the tenant has caused the violation.
- Landlords/owners are not required to post the inspection in the rental unit but the license must be maintained by the licensee and available to the tenant upon request.
- Every September, the city will mail a postcard to each licensed dwelling with general information about the Rental Licensing and Inspection Program.
- The city will use the website, www.lawrenceks.org/pds/rental-licensing as its primary point for information about the city's program.

Priority 3: General Public

- General information on the city's Rental Licensing and Inspection program.
- Code violation examples and what to look for if there is a concern in your neighborhood.
- How to report a code violation or concern to the city.
- The city will use the website, www.lawrenceks.org/pds/rental-licensing as its primary point for information about the city's program.

Communication Tools Available

- City newsletter (The Flame) and possible insert time
- City news releases
- Direct mail pieces to landlords, owners, tenants, apartment complex owners, neighborhood representatives

- Existing database with RS property contact info
- Lawrence In Focus video
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- *Lawrence Journal World* advertising
- Channel 6 news stories
- Fact sheet for landlords/owners and tenants "What to expect during your inspection"
- Channel 25 postings on program information
- Landlords and property managers distribution list (city email lists)
- Flyers with information at KU outreach programs (KU Legal Aid, new student orientation)
- Website promotion
- City web calendar
- Public meetings/seminars with landlords/tenants
- LAN email distribution list
- Landlords of Lawrence list
- Neighborhood newsletters and email lists
- City staff speaking opportunities as various civic/social organizations
- One-on-one meetings with property owners, property management
- LPD Neighborhood Resource Officer communication with owners/tenants
- Employee communication to city staff for general program knowledge and where to go if they receive questions

Timeline

Communication Tool	Proposed Date	Completed
Postcard to current RS zoned property owners, stakeholders, neighborhood contacts, large complexes on informational seminars (Seminar dates 5/15, 6/3 and 6/18)	April 25, 2014	X
Social media postings about upcoming meetings	May and June 2014	
Update city 'residents' section of website with program information and http://www.lawrenceks.org/pds/rental-licensing with program information	April and May 2014	Partial
Seminar dates posted on city calendar	April 2014	X
Seminar dates posted on Channel 25	April 2014	X
City news release	May 2014	
Ads in <i>Lawrence Journal World</i> about education seminars	May and June 2014	
Seminar information via email to landlord and property manager distribution list, LAN and Landlords Associations	May 2014	
Fact sheet for public education seminars	May 2014	

Tape <i>Lawrence In Focus</i> segment on Rental Licensing and Inspection Program	June 2014 edition	
<i>Flame</i> Newsletter article (RS zoned specific with info on 2015 program implementation)	June 2014	
Information to employees about Rental Licensing and Inspection Program	June 2014	
Program information posted on Channel 25	June 2014	
Social media postings rental licensing program	July 2014 – Dec. 2014	
City staff speak at civic/social organizations	Fall 2014	
City website featured story	TBA May and July 2014	
Distribute flyers to KU Legal Aid/student orientation	July/August 2014	
Direct mail postcard to licensed dwellings	September 2014	
City staff speak at civic/social organizations	Summer/Fall 2014	
City news release on 2015 implementation	October 2014 and December 2014	
Flame newsletter article on 2015 Rental Licensing and Inspection program implementation	November/December 2014	
Channel 25 updated with 2015 implementation program info	November 2014	
Public educational seminars scheduled for 2015 implementation (repeat of spring series)	TBA ?	
Social media posts	November and December 2014	
Ads in <i>Lawrence Journal World</i> about program implementation	TBA – Nov or Dec 2014	
Channel 6 news stories	November and December 2014	
<i>Lawrence In Focus</i> segment about inspection process and program	November 2014	
City website news feature	TBA – November and December 2014	
**Other outreach projects to be identified		