



Neighborhood Notes

News for rental property owners & managers from the Office of Neighborhood Services – May 2020

Returning to rental inspections in the reality of COVID-19

The City of Columbia suspended interior inspections starting March 17. Rental certificates that expired April 1 or May 1 have been given until June 1 to renew without penalty.

With the lift of the local and statewide Stay at Home Order we plan to resume rental inspections in May. Here is our plan to do that safely:

- We would like to start with inspecting **vacant units**. If you have vacant units that require a City inspection, even in future months, please let us know so we can complete those inspections.
- We are developing a protocol for entering occupied units with the guidance of the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services. This will include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by our staff, the use of disinfectants, and social distancing.
- If the tenant is sick, in quarantine or in self-isolation we will reschedule until that situation has passed at no fee to you.
- We will work with property owners and managers on virtual/remote inspections or photos for some re-inspections at no fee to reduce the need to visit properties in person.

There are many details to work out on this plan. The back side of this newsletter contains general guidance for rental property provided by the Health Department.

We appreciate your patience and cooperation. Please stay in touch with us with your comments or questions.

Landscape Management: It's mowing time again!

Last year, changes were made to Chapter 11 of City Code that formerly addressed weeds. The code now refers to Landscape Management and has added a number of definitions and references to better address native plantings.



What hasn't changed?

- Turf grass and weeds must still be mowed or trimmed to a height of not more than 12 inches.
- The City still has the ability to abate properties in violation and issuing a special tax bill against the property.

It is the hope of staff that this ordinance change will provide more clarity to property owners who want to have a managed native or ornamental yard while still providing an enforcement tool for properties that are not maintained.

Notices of violations of the Landscape Management Ordinance will continue to be sent to the owner of record per the Boone County Assessor. Owners should coordinate with their property managers or tenants if they are responsible for yard maintenance.

For properties that are in violation, the City has two remedies for enforcement: abatement with the cost charged to the property or prosecution in municipal court. Our staff plans to use prosecution as our primary enforcement tool in an effort to reduce our expenses and respond to repeat offenders.

Rent and the CARES Act

The City of Columbia will be receiving additional CDBG funds to assist with the impact of Covid-19. HUD has provided additional flexibility in addressing rental and mortgage assistance needs with these additional funds. The City of Columbia will be considering allocating these funds to rent/mortgage assistance, as well as a variety of COVID-19 related needs in the coming weeks.

Tenants who need assistance may want to contact local nonprofit organizations to apply for help. The Voluntary Action Center and Salvation Army are two organizations that provide housing assistance.

We need your email address!

Please provide us with your email address so we can communicate with you electronically. We relied on email to provide quick information to rental owners and managers this spring.

Please include your email with your renewal, or just drop a note to neighborhood@CoMo.gov and we will add it to our records.



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