

City of Northwood

627 Central Avenue
Northwood, IA 50459

Phone: 641-324-1075

Fax: 641-324-1190

E-Mail: citynwd@mchsi.com

July 21, 2014

Dear Landlord,

The City Council approved and adopted a Rental Registration and Inspection Program on June 23, 2014. This code and the enforcement process begins with your commitment to provide adequate, safe and sanitary living conditions. It takes the joint efforts of owners, tenants and the City to achieve a viable property maintenance program.

By enforcing compliance on a periodic basis, it is less likely that properties will deteriorate to the point where the owner must invest substantial money to repair the property. The inspection program adds a degree of desirability to rent in Northwood versus cities that do not have an inspection program. Those with a choice, will have confidence & trust in the quality of the rental market here and as the vacancy rate goes down, the value of investment property goes up.

Please fill out the enclosed Registration Application for each separate property that you own and rent. The registration and inspection fee is \$40.00 per unit payable every two years. If you have additional units under the same roof the fee will be \$40.00 with an additional \$25.00/unit. **Registration needs to be completed by September 2, 2014.** Please make checks payable to the City of Northwood. Payments can be made at City Hall or mailed to the address listed above. For complete information you should consult Chapter 148 of the City code. The Ordinance and General Requirements are available at City Hall or on the City website www.northwoodia.org.

Dale Feldt, Advantage Property Inspections, LLC will be conducting the inspections. Dale is a Certified Inspector with over eighteen years of experience. Enclosed is a landlord "checklist" for your reference. These helpful hints will assist landlords with the inspection process. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank You for your help as we move forward with this new program.

City of Northwood

Rental Inspection Checklist

To help you get a head start on the City's Rental Inspection Program, you can use this checklist to evaluate the condition of your rental property prior to a routine inspection. By using this guide, you may avoid a lengthy inspection and potentially costly re-inspection fees. Please note that, while it may be impossible to list every violation of the Housing Code that might occur, this list contains violations that are commonly found during inspections and has been compiled to assist you with compliance of the Property Maintenance Code. The following list is **NOT** the actual list used by the inspector and is only to be used as a guide to help owners know *some* of the things that will be inspected. To view a complete list of the City of Northwood Code of Ordinances, Chapter 148: Property Maintenance Requirements, please feel free to visit us at: www.northwoodia.org or stop by Northwood City Hall to see a copy at: 627 Central Ave., Northwood IA 50459. If you have any questions please call us at (641) 324-1075.

Exterior Areas of Property

- Are the address numbers visible from the street and are they 4 inches high by 1/2- inch stroke?
- Is the siding and paint in good condition?
- Are the garage and outbuildings structurally sound and in good condition?
- Are the steps, decks and landings safe to use?
- Are handrails present for all steps with four (4) or more risers? Is it located between 30 inches and 42 inches above the nosing of the treads?
- Guardrails present for all open porches, decks and landings higher than 30 inches above grade?
- Is garbage properly stored?
- Is the yard free from rubbish, debris and junk?
- Is the yard free from noxious weeds? Is the yard vegetation (grass) maintained to a proper height?
- Is the property's foundation free from holes, large cracks and openings?
- Is the property's siding free of excessive peeling paint or rot and decay?
- Is the property's roof weather tight?
- Are the rain gutters, downspouts and laterals attached properly and in good working condition?

Interior Areas of Property

Windows:

- Are all windows free from cracked or broken panes?
- All windows have latching hardware?
- All operable windows have screens? (No rips, tears or holes)
- All window glazing in good condition?
- All window frames, sashes and sills in good condition and weatherproof?
- All operable windows operate freely and capable of being held in position by current hardware

Doors:

- All doors to exterior have operable locks?
- Screen and storm door in operable, safe condition with proper hardware?
- Do the fire doors (if required) self-close to latch properly?

Surface Coverings:

- Are *all* the walls and ceilings free from peeling paint and/or loose plaster?
- Are *all* the interior surfaces maintained in a safe and sanitary condition?
- Are the floor coverings free from trip hazards?

Electrical System:

- Are *all* of the electrical equipment, wiring and appliances installed properly and maintained in a safe and approved manner?
- Are *all* cover plates for outlets, switches and junction boxes in place and in good condition?

Electrical System Cont.:

- Does every habitable space in the home have at least two separate and remote receptacle outlets?
- Is the dwelling served by a main electrical service that is not less than 60 amperes, three wires?
- Is the electrical system free of hazards?
- Does the laundry area contain at least one grounded-type receptacle or GFCI outlet?
- Are all receptacles (within 3 feet of a water source) of the GFCI type?
- Does the bathroom contain at least one receptacle?

- Is there a light fixture present for every public hall, interior stairway, toilet room, kitchen, bathroom, laundry room and heat-plant room?
- Are drop cords (extension cords) being used properly by tenants?

Heating System:

- Is the heating system capable of maintaining a room temperature of 68 degrees F. in *all* habitable rooms, bathrooms and toilet rooms, based on a winter outdoor temperature of minus 10 degrees F.?
- Are all mechanical equipment, fireplaces and solid fuel-burning appliances installed properly and maintained in a safe working condition?
- Are all fuel-burning heating equipment connected to an approved chimney or vent?
- Does the fuel-burning equipment have a reliable source of combustion air?
- Fuel-burning equipment has been inspected according to manufacturers suggestion and is labeled as such by a qualified contractor?

Plumbing System:

- Does the dwelling contain a bathtub or shower, lavatory, water closet and kitchen sink that is maintained in a safe working condition and is free from leaks?
- Are all the plumbing fixtures maintained in a safe and functional condition and free from leaks?
- Are the plumbing fixtures connected to a public water system or an approved private water system?
- Is the water heating equipment properly installed and equipped with a temperature and pressure relief (TPR) valve and relief valve discharge pipe?
- Are all the plumbing fixtures properly connected to an approved public or private sewer system?
- Do all of the plumbing stacks, vents, waste and sewer lines function properly and are free of obstructions, leaks and defects?

Light, Ventilation and Occupancy Limitations:

- Does every habitable space have at least one operable window that faces directly to the outdoors?
- Does the bathroom or toilet room have either an operable window or a mechanical means of ventilation?
- Is the clothes dryer properly vented?
- Does every habitable room, except the kitchen, have a plan dimension of not less than seven (7) feet?
- Is the kitchen or non-habitable spaces used for their intended purposes?
- Does the dwelling meet the space requirements of the occupants?

Fire Safety:

- Are smoke detectors located on each floor of the dwelling, including the basement?
- Are smoke detectors located within or immediately adjacent to all bedrooms?
- Do all the smoke detectors function properly?
- If you have a fire extinguisher present, is it accessible and in working condition?
- Does every sleeping room/bedroom have at least one operable window that meets emergency egress/rescue standards?
- Are hallways, exit doors, egress windows and stairways unobstructed and clear of rubbish and/or stored materials?
- Is there a 3-foot clearance around any heating appliance or other source of ignition within the dwelling? (Not including cooking stoves)

Other General Requirements:

- Are handrails present for all steps with four (4) or more risers? (Not less than 30-inches or more than 42-inches high above the nosing of the treads)
- Is the dwelling free from insect and rodent infestation? (Please see section 309 of the Northwood Rental Housing Maintenance Code for details about the responsible parties in properties)

Glossary of terms:

Egress: *The free and unobstructed access to the exterior of a habitable space.*

Habitable Space: *Space in the structure used for living, sleeping, eating or cooking. (Bathrooms, toilet rooms, closets, hallways, storage or utility spaces and similar areas are not considered habitable spaces.)*

Infestation: *The presence, within or contiguous to, a structure or premises of insects, rats, vermin or other pests.*

CHAPTER 148

LICENSING AND INSPECTION OF RENTAL PROPERTIES

148.01 Purpose	148.08 Revocation of Permit
148.02 Definitions	148.09 Inspection upon Complaint
148.03 Registration of Rental Properties	148.10 Required Abatement of Nonconforming Condition
148.04 Rental Permit Required	148.11 Property Standards
148.05 Consent to Inspection	148.12 Fees
148.06 Inspection of Real Property and Issuance of Rental Permit	148.13 Appeal
148.07 Rental Permit Effectiveness	148.14 Implementation of Chapter
	148.15 Violations

148.01 PURPOSE. The purpose of this chapter is to provide for the inspection of residential rental properties within the corporate limits of the City of Northwood, Iowa, in order to ensure that such properties conform to minimum standards deemed necessary for the protection of the health and safety of the occupants thereof and the occupants of surrounding properties, and to inhibit the spread of urban blight.

148.02 DEFINITIONS. For the purpose of interpreting this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Dwelling" means any house, building or mobile home, or portion thereof, occupied or intended to be occupied as the place of habitation of human beings, either permanently or transiently.
2. "Dwelling unit" means one or more rooms within a dwelling intended to be occupied by human beings for living purposes. If a common area and facilities for cooking and eating are provided in a dwelling for the use of the occupants of units therein, such common area and facilities shall constitute a part of each dwelling unit for the purpose of inspection and compliance with this chapter, notwithstanding the fact that cooking is not allowed in individual units.
3. "Manager" means a person or entity designated by the owner as the owner's agent in supervising the operation and leasing of the owner's rental property and authorized to act on behalf of the owner with the City concerning compliance with the requirements of this chapter.
4. "Owner" means any person, persons, entity or entities that have legal title, individually or collectively, to rental property.
5. "Rental permit" means the permit issued by the City of Northwood authorizing occupancy of a rental property.
6. "Rental property" means any dwelling or dwelling unit which is being held out or being offered for rent or is currently being let for rent and/or occupied by any person who is not the owner of the premises, except that the following properties shall not be regarded as rental properties:
 - A. Dwelling units owned by the United States of America, the State of Iowa, or the City of Northwood, Iowa.
 - B. Hotels and Bed and Breakfast Inns as defined by Chapter 137 of the Iowa Code.
 - C. All facilities that are licensed or certified by the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals.

148.03 REGISTRATION OF RENTAL PROPERTIES. The owner of a rental property is required to register the owner's rental property with the City by filing a completed registration form (as provided by the City) with the City Clerk accompanied by a fee for each dwelling or dwelling unit described in the registration form and in an amount as established from time to time by the City Council by appropriate resolution and which fee shall be set out in an appendix to the Northwood Municipal Code of Ordinances. Each owner must thereafter renew its registration bi-annually, occurring every two years, by filing a completed registration form (as provided by the City) with the City Clerk on or before the anniversary date of the last registration filing, accompanied by payment of the fee as described above. Registration forms shall be available at the office of the City Clerk during regular business hours or on the City website. Upon receipt of the completed registration form and payment of the registration/inspection fees, upon completion of the inspection certifying compliance with the property standards described in this ordinance, a rental permit will be issued to the owner.

148.04 RENTAL PERMIT REQUIRED. Except as otherwise provided herein, no owner shall rent or offer for rent any dwelling or dwelling unit for use in whole or in part for human habitation unless a rental permit has been issued for each dwelling unit. If a completed registration form, together with the required fee, has been received by the City, but the inspection cannot be completed within a reasonable time or prior to the expiration of the existing permit, then the City Clerk is authorized to issue a temporary rental permit pending completion of the inspection of the dwelling unit by the City,

and which will thereby authorize occupancy of the dwelling unit for the period designated in the temporary permit. No person shall occupy a dwelling unit unless a valid rental permit has been issued for the dwelling unit.

148.05 CONSENT TO INSPECTION. By filing a registration form with the City, the owner is granting its consent to an inspection of the rental property by the City for the purpose of determining compliance with the property standards set forth in this chapter.

148.06 INSPECTION OF RENTAL PROPERTY AND ISSUANCE OF RENTAL PERMIT. Rental properties shall be inspected and permits authorizing occupancy shall be issued as follows:

1. **Inspection.** Upon receiving a registration form and registration fee, the City Inspector will arrange to inspect each dwelling unit described in the registration form by contacting the owner or the manager to arrange for inspection within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed two weeks from the date of the City request for an inspection. The owner or manager shall be present at the time set for inspection and shall accompany the inspector during each inspection. The owner shall advise the occupant of these arrangements and of the occupant's right to also be present during the inspection.
2. **Issuance/Denial of the Rental Permit.** If the City inspector finds that the dwelling unit substantially conforms to the minimum standards as set forth in this chapter, then the rental permit shall thereupon be issued to the owner. If the inspection determines that the dwelling unit does not substantially conform with the standards, then the City will notify the owner of the specific findings of nonconformity and of the date by which abatement of these nonconforming conditions must be completed. In the event that the period for abatement extends beyond the expiration of the rental permit, then the City may issue a temporary rental permit for this abatement period unless the nonconforming conditions are deemed to be an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants. The City will re-inspect the property following expiration of the abatement deadline to confirm compliance with the property standards.
3. **Transfer of Ownership.** Upon transfer of ownership of the property for which the rental permit has been issued, the new owner or manager of the property shall apply for a transfer of the rental permit within 30 days after the date of transfer of ownership of the residential rental property. If application for transfer is timely made, then the rental permit will be transferred to the new owner or operator without charge or without further inspection and the rental permit will expire on the expiration date of the previous rental permit. If the application for transfer is not timely filed, then the City may cancel the rental permit and require registration of the unit and re-inspection before a rental permit is issued.

148.07 RENTAL PERMIT EFFECTIVENESS. Except as otherwise provided herein, a rental permit issued by the City pursuant to this chapter shall remain effective for a period of two years from the date of issuance. Prior to the second anniversary of the original permit, the City will notify the owner or manager of the requirement for re-inspection of the property, and will make arrangements for the inspection within a reasonable time. In the event that the owner or manager of rental property does not file a registration form and pay the required fee within 30 days following the expiration of the rental permit in any year, the City may, in its discretion, require re-inspection of the property as a condition for renewal of the rental permit.

148.08 REVOCATION OF PERMIT. A rental permit will be subject to revocation at any time after 10 days' prior written notice to the owner or manager upon the following occurrences:

1. Failure to timely file a registration form or timely pay the required fees for registration and inspection. Failure to cure this default within 10 days following receipt of the notice of noncompliance by the owner or manager.
2. Discovery of nonconforming conditions on the property and which are not abated within the time period prescribed for abatement by the City in its notification to the owner or manager of nonconforming conditions.
3. Conviction or judgment by a judge or judicial magistrate of the Iowa District Court finding a violation of any provision of this chapter.

In the event that the City Inspector determines that the conditions of the rental property present an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants thereof or of neighboring properties, then the rental permit may be revoked immediately without prior notice to the owner or manager.

148.09 INSPECTION UPON COMPLAINT. In addition to the inspections conducted by the City in conjunction with the issuance or renewal of rental permits, the City is authorized to inspect any rental property for compliance with the standards set forth in this chapter upon receiving a complaint from an occupant of the rental property concerning conditions on the property. The complaint shall be filed with the City Clerk on a form provided by the City. This form shall include a provision requiring the complainant to certify that he or she has registered a complaint with the landlord by certified mail at least fourteen (14) days prior to filing the complaint with the City and without receiving a satisfactory response from the owner or manager.

148.10 REQUIRED ABATEMENT OF NONCONFORMING CONDITION. Any owner who fails to abate nonconforming conditions, after receiving notice of noncompliance and within the time period prescribed by the City for abatement of these nonconforming conditions, is in violation of this Code of Ordinances.

148.11 PROPERTY STANDARDS. All rental properties must substantially conform to the following provisions of Chapter 147 Property Maintenance Requirements and the *International Property Maintenance Code*, 2012 as published by the International Code Council, Inc., the provisions of which are by this reference adopted and made part of this chapter:

1. Section 301.2 pertaining to Responsibility
2. Section 302.5 pertaining to Rodent Harborage
3. Section 304.1.1 pertaining to Unsafe Conditions, Exterior Structure
4. Section 304.3 pertaining to Premises Identification
5. Section 304.12 pertaining to Handrails and Guards
6. Section 304.13 pertaining to Window, Skylight and Door Frames
7. Section 304.15 pertaining to Doors
8. Section 304.18 pertaining to Building Security
9. Section 305 pertaining to Unsafe Conditions, Interior Structure
10. Section 306 pertaining to Unsafe Conditions, Component Serviceability
11. Section 307 pertaining to Handrails and Guardrails
12. Section 309 pertaining to Pest Elimination
13. Section 402.2 pertaining to Common Halls and Stairways
14. Section 403.1 pertaining to Habitable Spaces
15. Section 403.2 pertaining to Bathrooms and Toilet Rooms
16. Section 403.5 pertaining to Clothes Dryer Exhaust
17. Section 502.1 pertaining to Dwelling Units
18. Section 504 pertaining to Plumbing Systems and Fixtures
19. Section 505 pertaining to Water Supply
20. Section 506.1 pertaining to Sanitary Drainage System, General
21. Section 506.2 pertaining to Maintenance
22. Section 602 pertaining to Heating Facilities (dates for heat being November 1 through April 1, inclusive)
23. Section 603 pertaining to Mechanical Equipment
24. Section 604 pertaining to Electrical Facilities
25. Section 605 pertaining to Electrical Equipment
26. Section 606.2 pertaining to Elevators
27. Section 702.1 pertaining to Means of Egress, General
28. Section 702.3 pertaining to Means of Egress, Locked Doors
29. Section 704 pertaining to Fire Protection Systems

148.12 FEES. The following fees will be assessed to and paid by rental property owners in an amount as established from time to time by the City Council by appropriate resolution and which fees shall be set out in an appendix to the Northwood Municipal Code of Ordinances:

1. Registration/Inspection Fee. Due upon filing initial and subsequent annual registration of rental properties with the City Clerk.
2. Additional Inspection Fee. Due and payable for each inspection of a dwelling or dwelling unit that is in addition to an inspection required by this chapter and one follow-up inspection.

3. Complaint Inspection Fee. Due and payable for each inspection conducted by the City pursuant to a complaint filed with the City Clerk. If the property is not in compliance the property owner will be liable for the inspection Fee. If found to be in compliance the tenant will be liable for the inspection fee.
4. Failure to Appear Fee. Due and payable upon failure of the owner or manager to appear at a scheduled inspection of a dwelling or dwelling unit.

Permits will not be issued nor inspections made until the fees required by this section have been received by the City Clerk.

148.13 APPEAL. Any person aggrieved by a decision of the City in its administration of this chapter may file a request with the City Clerk, on a form provided by the City Clerk, and directed to the City Inspector requesting reconsideration of the contested decision. The City Inspector will notify the applicant, in writing, within five days after its receipt by the City Clerk, of his decision. If the aggrieved party is not satisfied with the response of the City Clerk, the aggrieved party may, within 10 days following the date of the City Clerk's response, file a written appeal to the City Council, on a form provided by the City Clerk, requesting reconsideration of the contested decision. This written appeal shall be filed with the City Clerk. The City Clerk will thereupon notify the aggrieved party of the date, time and place of hearing before the City Council and at such hearing the aggrieved party may present testimony and evidence in support of his/her position. The City Council will render an opinion on this appeal within 10 days following the date of hearing.

148.14 IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER. The City may implement the registration and inspection of rental properties in stages in order to facilitate an orderly inspection of all rental properties requiring rental permits. The City may issue temporary rental permits to owners pending inspection of rental properties for which registration forms have been filed.

148.15 VIOLATIONS. The violation of any provision of this chapter shall constitute a violation of the City of Northwood Code of Ordinances and subjecting the violator to the following penalties:

1. Criminal Penalties. Any owner who violates provision of this chapter shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor.
2. Civil Penalties. Any violation of this chapter or failure to perform any act or duty or requirement of this chapter shall constitute a municipal infraction under Chapter 4 of this Code of Ordinances.
3. Other Code Provisions. The foregoing provisions concerning enforcement of this chapter are not exclusive but are cumulative to any other remedies available under State law or local ordinance.

(Ch. 148 – Ord. 160 – Jul. 14 Supp.)