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## City of Newton Rental Inspection Checklist

**All rental properties within the City of Newton must be regularly inspected according to the schedule in the Administrative Policy. The checklist below is a simplified summary of items that will be inspected during the inspection process. This document should be understood as general guidance to the Rental Housing Inspection Program and should not be construed as a legally binding code. More information and references can be reviewed within the Newton Municipal Code Chapter 151: Minimum Rental Housing Code and/or additional information can be requested from the Community Development Department.**

### ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLIANCE

- Property owner applies for minimum rental housing occupancy permit for each dwelling unit before tenants can be allowed.
- Ownership (and, if applicable, management) contact information clearly identified on the application.
- Rental Housing Permit applied for and renewed each year.
- Registration and permit fees paid and addressed to “City of Newton.”
- Inspection conducted once every three years for properties (landlord submits payment directly to inspector).
- Contact information posted visibly on site.
- Foundation appears to be in adequate and in good repair
- Property does not have broken, rotten, split, or buckled walls.
- Stairways, porches, decks, and balconies have flooring, supports, and handrails in acceptable condition (i.e., structurally sound - firmly fastened and properly anchored, capable of supporting all nominal loads and resisting load effects; a 4-inch sphere should not be able to pass between guards on open side, etc.).
- Site appears to have adequate grading and drainage.
- Known cisterns, wells, or other hazards are fenced, covered, or filled.
- Property is not overgrown with weeds or brush. Yard is properly mowed.
- Property does not have an accumulation of garbage, junk, rubbish, or debris (e.g., paper, plastics, metals, boxes, dead organic matter, etc.).
- Property is not providing habitation for rodents, wild animals, or other vermin.
- Property doesn't have illegal vehicles on site.
- Property does not have unsafe storage and/or an excessive accumulation of combustible materials or conditions that constitute fire, health, or safety hazards. Required clearances to combustible materials shall be maintained.
- If the property has guttering, it is in a safe and acceptable condition (e.g., free from obstructions, no leaks, discharged in a manner that does not create a public nuisance, etc.).

### EXTERIOR AREAS/STRUCTURE

- Property has address number(s) clearly visible from the street.
- Roof and walls not deteriorated and don't have paint peeling in excess of 50% of the exterior surfaces for the entire structure.
- Accessory building(s) and fence(s) are in acceptable condition (i.e., structurally sound and in good repair, capable of withstanding imposing wind and snow loads; no visible leaning or broken/missing pickets).
- Doors are operable and locks are functional. Sleeping areas should have doors latchable or lockable from within for privacy and safety. Latches or locks should be of the type to permit swift emergency exit in accordance with the International Fire Code.
- Windows and skylights are operable and undamaged. No torn screens or broken windowpanes.
- Chimneys appear to be structurally safe and undamaged.

## **INTERIOR AREAS/STRUCTURE**

- Walls, ceilings, and floors are structurally sound and in acceptable condition. No splitting, sagging, leaning, or buckling due to defective material or deterioration.
- The building is maintained in a safe and sanitary manner (e.g., surfaces are kept reasonably clean and free from dirt or greasy film; insects, rodents, or other pests on the premises are not evident; rubbish, garbage, and any other organic waste is properly disposed of or stored in appropriate facilities or containers).
- The dwelling unit shall contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare and serve foods in a sanitary manner (e.g., adequate counter and appliances, facilities for temporary storage of food wastes and garbage are maintained in sanitary condition, no missing or broken cabinet doors, etc.).
- All stairs are in acceptable condition. All stairs must have handrails and balusters or similar feature(s) that prevents a fall hazard from the open-side (e.g., guards required if more than 30 inches above floor/grade; a 4-inch sphere should not be able to pass between guards on open side, etc.).
- Handrails are firmly fastened and in acceptable condition for all stairs (i.e., firmly fastened and properly anchored, capable of supporting all nominal loads and resisting load effects).
- All habitable rooms are provided with adequate electrical service for proper illumination. Natural light is provided in all habitable rooms.
- Every door and window, to include all hardware associated with every door and window, shall be maintained in good and functional condition and shall be capable of providing privacy.
- There is adequate ventilation and no signs of leakage or mold inside.
- The carpet is not excessively ripped or torn creating a possible trip hazard.
- There is no evidence of mice or rodents.

## **PLUMBING**

- Rental unit has use of functioning kitchen sink, toilet, and bathtub or shower.
- All applicable fixtures have hot and cold water and are connected to sanitary sewer system with proper clearance for usage and cleaning.
- Every plumbing fixture and water and waste pipe shall be maintained in good and sanitary working condition.
- Bathrooms provide adequate privacy and ventilation for users.

## **ELECTRICAL/MECHANICAL**

- Electrical service is properly maintained and is sufficient to support the electrical usage.
- Adequate clearance for service is provided on the control side of all HVAC and utility appliances.
- Each unit has heating facilities capable of maintaining a room temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit in all habitable rooms and bathrooms. Cooking appliances and portable heating units shall not be used to provide heating to meet requirement.
- All electrical equipment, wiring, lighting, and appliances are properly installed and maintained in a safe and approved manner. No unsafe, exposed wiring is in the living area.
- No temporary wiring or extension cords shall be used to connect portable electric fixtures to convenience outlets.
- Electrical panels are accessible, clearly marked, and circuits are properly labeled.
- All necessary electrical equipment is properly installed (e.g., knockouts, clamps, connectors, wiring, conductors, fittings, apparatus, devices, appliances, fixtures, signs or parts thereof).
- Fuel-fired equipment has appropriate and functioning flues and shutoff valves.
- Every habitable room and every bathroom contains at least one (1) properly installed electrical outlet.
- Every laundry room contains at least one (1) grounded-type receptacle or a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- Air exhausted by a mechanical ventilation system from a bathroom or toilet room shall discharge to the outdoors and shall not be recirculated.
- Clothes dryers shall be exhausted/vented in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and shall be independent of all other systems.
- There are cover plates on all outlets, switches, and junction boxes.
- GFCI outlets installed for all outlets within six (6) feet of a water source.
- Water heaters have a properly installed pressure relief valve (PRV) with the discharge pipe reaching to within six inches of the floor.

## **FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

- Place one smoke alarm in each sleeping room. Place one smoke alarm immediately outside of sleep areas (e.g., hallway). Place at least one smoke alarm on each floor, including the basement.
  - Each unit has an appropriately-sized, ABC-rated fire extinguisher.
    - For single-family properties, one properly maintained fire extinguisher, with a minimum size of 1-A 5-BC, must be present within the home.
    - For multi-family properties, there must be a minimum 2-A 10-BC extinguisher – checked and tagged by a qualified service person annually – located within 75 feet of each unit’s main entrance with a minimum of one (1) per floor or within each unit.
  - Place one carbon monoxide detector immediately outside of each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of the bedrooms (e.g., hallway). There must be at least one carbon monoxide detector on each floor, including the basement (Only applies to properties with a potential carbon monoxide source).
  - Fire alarm and suppression systems properly installed and operational where required.
  - Two clear and passable egress routes exist for each floor above the first floor. Exit signs are in working condition.
  - Except for a sleeping room on the first story or below grade, neither means of egress shall consist solely of a window approved for emergency escape or rescue.
  - All sleeping rooms have safe and appropriate access to a functioning window for egress. Sleeping rooms are prohibited in basements without an appropriate secondary egress route such as an approved egress window and well.
  - All egress doors and windows are operable from the inside without the need for keys, special knowledge, or effort.
  - All fire resistance rating of walls, fire stops, floors, and doors, etc. are properly maintained.
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**Rental property owners or managers reviewing this checklist may be curious about what items are most commonly noted as violations during rental inspections. The list below is meant to summarize the violations that have been identified the most frequently in Newton rental units. Similar to the inspection checklist above, this is not meant to be an all-encompassing list, but it should serve as another helpful tool to ensure a property passes the initial inspection.**

- **Fire Safety** --- inadequate number of or improper placement of smoke and CO detectors, missing fire extinguisher, blocked egress routes, etc.
- **Electrical-related issues** --- outlet(s) within 6 feet of water source not GFI, missing electrical panel knockouts or labels, missing outlet/switch covers or junction boxes, exposed wiring, etc.
- **Fall hazards** --- anything 30 inches above the floor/grade shall have guards; handrail needed if 4+ risers; a 4-inch sphere should not be able to pass between guards on open side, etc.
- **Major appliance issue** --- missing/improper installation/malfunction of water heater, water heater discharge pipe, dryer exhaust/vent, furnace, bathroom ventilation, etc.
- **Windows** --- Broken, cracked, inoperable, or blocked (egress) window