

Be Inclusive & Make Decisions Democratically:

The more people involved in your tenant association, the stronger it will be. The association should represent the diversity in your building and reflect everyone's needs. Always make important decisions at meetings that are open to all tenants and seek input from everyone.

Share Leadership: Current leaders should work to build the leadership of other residents who are not as active. Multiple tenants should be running for elected positions and elected leaders should change from time to time.

Distribute a Newsletter: A regular newsletter is a good way to get all tenants involved and keep them aware of what is happening in the building.

Organize Around a Specific Issue:

This will give the group and its members a sense of purpose. However, if your building doesn't have any pressing problems, a tenant association is still a great way to build community, make long-term plans, and be prepared in case problems arise.

Some issues to organize around are: potential loss of a Section 8 subsidy, sale of the building, tenant purchase, maintenance or security problems, or a rent increase.

Seek Legal Counsel: If the association is having trouble negotiating with the building owner, or if tenants are interested in purchasing the building, consult a lawyer to learn about your options, strategies, and possible legal action.

Be realistic in your expectations: In order to get requests met, tenants must be willing to bargain.



You may have to pay more rent or give up some services to get other requests. But, if your goal is to get the landlord to correct substantial violations of D.C. Housing Code, then no additional rent should be charged.



A Tenant Association can help you and your neighbors build a sense of community; give you a voice in decisions about the conditions and future of your building; and facilitate dialogue between tenants, owners and managers to make your building a better place to live!!!



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Affordable Housing Preservation Program

PRESENTS:

Building and Sustaining a Successful Tenant Association





A Tenant Association is an organization of neighbors who act as a unified group to make their building a better place to live. The association will meet regularly to work towards their goals and can make decisions and enter into contracts to benefit all the residents at their property. Through a tenant association residents can accomplish together what would be impossible to accomplish individually.



A Tenant Association can put tenants on equal ground with the building owner!!

An effective tenant association is active!

Why Form A Tenant Association?

- To build community! As a way for neighbors to get to know each other.
- To improve living conditions, including maintenance, safety, and improper actions by the owner or employees.
- To exercise your right as tenants to purchase your building.
- To mediate between residents, management and owners.
- To support each other and share work and resources by having people with different skills working towards the tenants' goals.
- To take on neighborhood or city wide issues that affect tenants, like supporting a new community center or rent control.
- To maintain a building as affordable by preserving a rent subsidy, such as Section 8 or tax credits.

To make your Tenant Association more inclusive, provide translation, organize childcare and make sure the space is accessible to elderly and disabled residents.

Tips for Organizing a Successful Tenant Association

Hold Regular Meetings: Hold frequent meetings to discuss building conditions, needed repairs, and the services you want. Meetings can be held monthly or even weekly depending on the needs of your organization. Survey residents to learn what the best time for most tenants to meet. Each meeting should have a purpose so residents leave with a feeling of accomplishment. Always keep written minutes of the meetings, particularly of decisions you make.



Adopt Bylaws: Bylaws are rules for making decisions, electing officers and running the association. They enable it to operate fairly and democratically. Bylaws should be developed, understood and accepted by all tenants.

Incorporate as a nonprofit organization: This shows that your group is a serious entity and gives the association more leverage in legal matters.

Meet regularly with Owners or Management: Maintaining good communication with owners or management is important for resolving maintenance problems, security, and other issues that may come up. Be as specific as possible when you meet about the existing problems and the remedies you want.



Act as a Unified Group: Before meeting with the owner or management, reach an agreement within the group on goals and priorities. Nothing weakens your bargaining position more than showing your landlord that the tenant association does not know what it wants.