



The Houston Rental Owner's Playbook

How to run a rental well, what Texas expects of you, and when to hand it off.

Greater Houston edition



Illustration. Not a property we manage or list.

The job, in one page

A rental is a small business with five recurring jobs: keep it leased, collect the rent, keep it safe and repaired, keep the records, and decide each year whether to hold, improve or sell. Owners who struggle usually do each job well enough; they lose money between them, in vacant weeks and deferred repairs.

Job	What good looks like
Leasing	Priced from current comparable rentals; written criteria; applications answered the same day
Rent	Due date, late fee and payment method in the lease; one follow-up process, applied every time
Maintenance	Repairs acknowledged quickly; a short vendor list; a preventive schedule
Records	Income, expenses, deposits and notices kept per property; statements every month
Strategy	A once-a-year look at rent, value, taxes and condition: hold, improve or sell

Texas rules that trip owners up

These summaries point to the section of the Texas Property Code a lawyer would check. They are not the full rule.

What the rule requires	Texas Property Code
Return the security deposit, with an itemized list of any deductions, within 30 days after the tenant surrenders the home.	§92.103, §92.104
A late fee needs a written lease provision, rent unpaid two full days after it was due, and a reasonable amount. A fee up to 12% of monthly rent is treated as reasonable for a building with four or fewer units (10% for larger buildings).	§92.019
Rekey exterior locks within 7 days after each tenant turnover, and provide the required security devices.	§92.153, §92.156
Repair conditions that materially affect health or safety after notice; 7 days is presumed reasonable in most cases.	§92.052, §92.056
Make your printed tenant selection criteria available with the application and have the applicant sign an acknowledgment; otherwise a rejected applicant can get the application fee back.	§92.3515
Tell tenants whether the home is in a 100-year floodplain and whether it has flooded in the last five years.	§92.0135
Disclose who owns and who manages the property when the tenant asks, or in the lease.	§92.201
Install and maintain working smoke alarms.	Subchapter F, §92.251 and following

Evictions follow Chapter 24 of the Property Code and Justice Court rules, which Texas revised in 2025. Get counsel or your manager involved before serving any notice.

Houston specifics

Storm season (June 1 to November 30)

- Know whether each property is in a floodplain and keep its flood history with your records.
- Review wind and flood coverage before June; flood policies usually have a 30-day waiting period.
- Keep tenant contact details current and send a short storm-prep note when a named storm is forecast.
- Line up a water-mitigation vendor in advance; after a big storm everyone is calling the same five companies.

Property taxes

- Rentals do not get the homestead exemption, so taxes are often the largest operating cost.
- Review every appraisal notice. The protest deadline is May 15 or 30 days after the notice is delivered, whichever is later (Texas Tax Code §41.44).
- Check for MUD or PID assessments on newer homes; they can be a large share of the bill.

HOAs

- Read the deed restrictions for leasing rules, minimum lease terms and registration requirements.
- Give tenants the rules that apply to them; violations usually land on the owner.

What to track every month

Measure	Why it matters
Rent collected vs. rent due	Collection problems compound; act on day two, not day twenty
Days vacant this year	One vacant month costs about 8% of a year's rent
Open repairs and their age	Small leaks become large claims
Reserve balance per property	Roofs, HVAC and water heaters fail on their own schedule
Rent vs. current comparables	Under-market rent is a quiet, compounding loss

Self-manage or hire a manager?

Self-managing works when you live nearby, have time for showings and repairs, and enjoy it. Hiring a manager makes sense when vacancy, late rent or repairs are costing more than a fee would, when you own several homes, or when you live out of town. Compare total cost, including your time and vacancy days, not just the fee.

- Ask any manager how they price rent and to show you the comparables behind a recommendation.
- Ask what the fee covers and what costs extra: leasing, renewals, maintenance markups, inspections.

- Ask how you will see your money: owner portal, monthly statements, year-end tax documents.
- Ask what happens when you want to sell. With us, the same team can list it, make a cash offer or market it to investors.

Want this done for your rental?

Request a free Houston Rental Analysis at gablewaypropertymanagement.com, or call **(713) 766-1197**. GableWay leases and manages Houston rentals, and as a licensed brokerage we can help you buy, renovate or sell them.

General information for Texas rental owners, not legal advice. Laws and court rules change; confirm current requirements with a Texas attorney before relying on them.

GableWay Realty · TREC Broker #9016827-BB · Designated Broker Lauren Gray Miller #588130-B · Information About Brokerage Services and Consumer Protection Notice at gablewayrealty.com · Equal Housing Opportunity