

City Addresses Misconceptions on Crime-Free Initiative

DeKalb's new Crime-Free Initiative will be an important tool in combating weapons offenses and other crimes in our community by holding landlords accountable for allowing crimes to continue at their properties. The City would like to address some misconceptions about this plan.

Misconception 1 – The crime-free housing ordinance violates the Fair Housing Act and Illinois Human Rights Act. Incorrect. There have been no court rulings invalidating a crime-free housing ordinance under these Acts, and these ordinances have been approved in more than 100 Illinois communities since 1992. In fact, several courts have rejected similar challenges to similar crime-free housing ordinances, and the US Supreme Court upheld similar crime-free lease restrictions.

By contrast, the City's Crime-Free Initiative promotes fair housing for all of our residents. The City strongly believes every resident deserves a safe place to live where crimes are not allowed to happen repeatedly near their homes.

Misconception 2 – The ordinance violates state law by not exempting victims of domestic and sexual violence and those with disabilities. Incorrect. In fact, the opposite is true. The ordinance includes clear language protecting crime victims. This includes exempting calls relating to domestic and sexual violence and those with disabilities from the crime-free program. Read more on the protections for crime victims here: <https://tinyurl.com/yrccs6ad>.

Misconception 3 – The ordinance requires landlords to perform background checks. Incorrect. The City believes it is important for landlords to have a security plan for keeping their properties safe. While a plan will be required, it is not required that the plan include background checks. If landlords choose to perform these checks, they then must follow state law on background checks.

Misconception 4 – The ordinance requires landlords to evict tenants based on an arrest record. Incorrect. As part of the program, landlords will be able to prevent a penalty if they can show steps are being taken to provide crime-free housing. It is not a requirement that these steps include eviction.

Public debate on any proposed ordinance is vital. The City's intent is that these clarifications ensure that public debate is grounded in factual information.

The Crime-Free Initiative was considered by the City Council on Sept. 26 and was given first reading on Oct. 10. It will come for second reading and a final vote at the Council's meeting on Oct. 24 at 6 p.m. in the Yusunas Meeting Room at the DeKalb Public Library.