



## Behind the Business: Profile of a Rochester Landlord

Ask any landlord what the secret is to retaining good tenants and they might all give you the same answer—keeping up with the properties maintenance and repairs. However, if you ask Rochester landlord Robert Tucker, he'll say it takes much more than just being a fix-it man.



Robert first came to NeighborWorks® Rochester in search of a landlord loan that would help him make some needed repairs and updates to his properties—specifically, new glass blocks for the basement windows, new front and back doors, the rebuilding of a front porch and siding repair.

NeighborWorks® Rochester's Landlord Services Coordinator, Matt Hjelmhaug, could tell upon first meeting Robert that he was a unique landlord with quite a story to tell. Robert hasn't had an eviction in 30 years! Upon learning this, we were anxious to know what kept his tenants so happy. Since this is such an unusual and noteworthy accomplishment, we met up with Robert to talk about his successes of being a landlord.

Robert first got into the landlord business in 1980 with one property in Buffalo. Later, after being laid off from Xerox and with a background in engineering, his first thought was, "What am I going to do now?" That's when he spotted a home for sale and decided to take his interest in being a landlord to a whole new level. He currently has a total of eight properties, and up until recently has never been forced to evict any of his tenants. Impressively, on average, Robert's tenants stay with him for five to six years.

In the beginning of his landlord journey, Robert says he received some valuable education from The Housing Council of Rochester, and learned what was required to make a successful landlord.

"You have to run it [being a landlord] like a business, not a hobby," said Robert, "You also have to focus on the customers needs. **My philosophy is, if I wouldn't live there, then no one else would want to either.**" Robert takes great care in his properties, and even had one tenant cry because she was so excited to move into one of his apartments.

Part of how Robert treats being a landlord like a business is in his strategic planning. After someone fills out a rental application, Robert conducts an interview—one with the customer face-to-face and one with the customer in their current residence. He believes visiting the customer in their current residence is important because you are able to see how they live, which can give a landlord a good indication of how the customer will treat their new home. He screens tenants based on longevity, attitude, cleanliness and more. He also has three simple rules: 1.) Pay your rent on time, 2.) Don't damage the property and 3.) Get along with the neighbors.

Robert doesn't just stop at screening and making rules, however; he also works to build relationships with his customers. When asked why he thought he had gone so long without an eviction, Robert's answer was simple: "**These houses are my homes and the people in them are guests in my home.**" When there is a problem in one of his properties, Robert fixes it right away. When there isn't a problem, Robert is in constant communication with his tenants to make sure everything is going well for them. He even buys them gifts at Christmas and stops by periodically to check on the landscaping.

Robert is probably among the most successful landlords in the Rochester area because of his ability to balance running his properties like a business, while at the same time building relationships. However, he also believes the calling of landlord isn't for everyone. His advice for first-time landlords? "You have to enjoy people and understand their needs, and then you can know how to help them," said Robert, **"Out of all my jobs, this is the one I like the most."**

With a strong knowledge of the business, a passion for helping people and a love for everything Rochester, Robert Tucker truly is an expert in his field and personifies what it means to be a good landlord.

*NeighborWorks® Rochester is now offering home improvement loans to landlords who are interested in improving their properties. For more information on this program, please contact Jared Strohl at 325-4170 ext. 318.*