

Stephen Wershing ([00:07](#)):

Welcome back to 30 Minute Money. I'm Steve Wershing. We're coming up on a time of year when people will be graduating. Many people will be relocating in the country and many of them will need to find a new apartment. So I thought it would be good to talk with an expert about how to most effectively find an apartment and how to make sure that your next experience is a positive one. Adrian Winter is property manager for the Mark Siwiec team, one of the most successful real estate teams in Rochester. There he manages 134 apartments. And before he joined the team, he worked for a national company organizing remodelings and rentals for properties all over the country. He's worked in San Diego, in Atlanta, in Baltimore and other places. So he's got over a decades experience in organizing these kinds of things. So he's the one we wanted to go to to ask him the advice about how to find the right place and how to establish the right relationship. So Adrian Winter, thanks for joining us.

Adrian Winter ([01:06](#)):

Thank you for having me very much. I appreciate it.

Stephen Wershing ([01:09](#)):

So let's just start off with the lay of the land. What's the rental market like in Rochester? What's it like to try to find an apartment?

Adrian Winter ([01:17](#)):

Yeah, so right now, plain and simple, the rental market is very competitive in Rochester. I think that is a very common theme in a lot of cities throughout the country right now and for the past few years, to be honest. Historically Rochester has been, at least in my experience, a little bit behind the curb in terms of prices and competitiveness and that kind of thing. But it's really catching up right now. In the past two or three rental seasons we've really noticed that it is more competitive now than it ever has been. There's tons of competition for everything from studios to three or four bedroom units.

Stephen Wershing ([02:11](#)):

Yeah. So I know that the real estate market itself is white hot around here now and that if you want to buy a house, for example, you had better be on top of things and you better have an all cash offer and you'd better be first in the door. Is it like that for apartments, or for rentals I should say, renting houses or apartments, is it that competitive?

Adrian Winter ([02:35](#)):

It's not that competitive, but it is similar in a sense. What I've really found is that it's really trickling down from the competitiveness of the sales side of things in terms of real estate. There's a lot of competition, just in a sense of a lot of people who would be, or are ready to be, first time home buyers, for example, that normally would move on from an apartment to buy their first home are having trouble right now because of how competitive the real estate market is, especially in that price range of a first time home buyer, generally. So a lot of renters are ending up staying an

extra few years because of that even if they are ready, they're pre-approved to buy a house, they really just are having a lot of trouble because there's so much competition. So that is essentially log jamming the rental market where a lot of those apartments would be opening up because people are moving on to a first time home purchase. They're staying longer and then there's still more people coming to look to rent apartments so that's just adding to the competition.

Stephen Wershing ([03:51](#)):

Okay. Yeah. So, we have a challenging marketplace, a competitive marketplace. If somebody's starting out that search, they're starting to look for an apartment, what kinds of things can they do to try to locate and then secure an apartment that they would like?

Adrian Winter ([04:09](#)):

Yeah, so it really is different in almost every city. For example, if you live in New York or Boston or one of those cities, a lot of times people will use a licensed real estate agent to help them find an apartment, which that is definitely an option here in Rochester. It's not the most common way to go about finding an apartment. My personal opinion, I think that the best way really to get somewhat of an advantage or to see the best units is really to have a local contact in the city of Rochester that has experience and that can kind of steer you in the right direction once they find out some information on what you're looking for, some details, because that will really give you an advantage over a lot your peers that are looking for apartments, because it is so competitive.

As we discussed earlier, a lot of property managers and landlords, if they post an apartment online, they're within 24 hours getting over a hundred emails or calls or texts for these apartments that they posted. And it is really difficult to weed through a lot of those calls and emails when you're getting such a high volume of them. So if you can get somebody that can just say, "I've got these three units available", or "I could show you something along these lines", it's really going to get your foot in the door. It's going to be an advantage.

Stephen Wershing ([05:56](#)):

So when you say get ahold of somebody, how would they find somebody like that? You mentioned contacting a real estate agent who might be able to help you find somebody, but when you say, make a contact and have that kind of conversation, who are you talking about and how would people find them?

Adrian Winter ([06:16](#)):

Yeah. I think if you're coming to the Rochester area and you don't know anybody in the real estate market or anything like that, which is obviously very common, I think a good way to start would be contacting, if you've got friends locally or family, or anybody that has rented in the last five years that had a good experience with an apartment, I think a great way would just be to contact some of those people and say, "Who's your landlord or property manager? Do you know if they have any vacancies? Do you know if they have any units coming up?" That type of thing. And

just to get a contact, an email or a phone number from somebody, whether it's a property manager or a landlord, and just reach out to them and start that way.

And if they don't have anything right at that time, you can say, "Well, can you keep my number? Can you keep my information and let me know if you have anything coming up or talk to any of your colleagues that might have some apartments coming up in the area." That type of thing, I think, is very beneficial when there's so much competition right now, just to be able to spark a conversation with somebody that can at least steer you in the right direction and go from there.

Stephen Wershing ([07:39](#)):

So, you call a friend or a family member, somebody who's renting or has rented recently and get that contact for the property manager. If the property manager says, "No, really we have nothing available right now." Could you ask, "Are there other property managers you would suggest I call?" Or is that not done?

Adrian Winter ([07:57](#)):

Sure. No. I think that in the rental side of things, there's nothing wrong with that and a lot of times, if a property manager or a landlord, somebody like myself, if we really don't have any units available, a lot of times we'll say, "Well, I'll have something maybe in 45 days or something. I can keep your information and call you when I get confirmation that something's going to be available." But if that timeframe doesn't work out for you, which is fine, a lot of times we know somebody else, or there's a friend of a friend who might have something available, it's just a good way to get the ball rolling.

Stephen Wershing ([08:46](#)):

Yeah.

Adrian Winter ([08:47](#)):

Instead of just blatantly searching online.

Stephen Wershing ([08:50](#)):

Yeah. Well, and so you bring up another thought that, if it is that competitive and you're talking about, I may have something open in the next 45 days, how far ahead should people be starting to do these searches? If they know they're going to be moving to town on the first of a particular month, how far ahead should they start looking?

Adrian Winter ([09:12](#)):

Yeah. So that's a little bit of a fine line because a lot of times I will have somebody approach me and say, "I will be moving here. I'm looking for an apartment, this budget, this neighborhood" kind of thing, which is great, but they'll say, "I'm not moving there for four months." And that's a little too soon because especially for property managers and landlords, you really can't ask a potential tenant four months before their lease expires, if they're going to be moving out, that type of thing, so

it's a little bit early. Sometimes we have a sense somebody's been there for a few years or we know that they've started the home buying process they're most likely going to be moving so maybe you can line something up, but I would say a good point to go on would be 60 days, roughly, before, maybe even a little bit earlier, but at the same time, if it's inside 60 days, that's not the end of the world. A lot of times 45 to 30 days is enough notice too.

Stephen Wershing ([10:25](#)):

Okay. How fast do places turn over now? I mean, if somebody leaves, how long typically is, I assume it's not open very long if it's that competitive a marketplace. How big a window is there usually between when somebody leaves and the next person moves in?

Adrian Winter ([10:40](#)):

Correct. Yeah. We really don't have any gaps, to be honest. It's more somebody moves out of an apartment, 99% of the time by the time they move out, we've already got somebody signed on, leased, ready to move in. And at that point, it's really just how much time do we, as a property management company or landlord, need to turn that unit over and get it ready for the next tenant so that it's in the condition that we would want somebody to rent one of our apartments in.

So that can range anywhere from, we've turned over apartments, if we have to, in a weekend or a handful of days. If somebody is out on the 31st and somebody else needs to be in by the fifth, a lot of times, we can do that. A lot of times, most common with us, is we'll do half a month. So 15 days, essentially, if somebody moves on the 31st, we would like to get the next person in by the 15th of the following month if we can, but nothing longer than 30 days. And that's usually if we need to really paint an apartment or make any sort of other updates like that.

Stephen Wershing ([12:00](#)):

Sure. So, if somebody is looking, it's a competitive marketplace, they can ask friends and family if they've rented lately, they could ask property managers directly and then if the property manager has nothing coming up, they might refer those folks to other property managers. What about if you're moving to town because you're taking a new job, would it make sense to ask people at the new employer about who they might be connected to or who in that office might be the right thing that they could connect with their property manager?

Adrian Winter ([12:42](#)):

Yeah, of course. Like I said, I don't think it ever hurts to have a local contact, a person that you can email directly, call or text, just to establish any sort of relationship. Just because in the competitive market that we have now, just going blindly online through the apartment search websites, anything like that really is kind of, you're feeling around in the dark a lot and the worst is when you find a great apartment online, you love the pictures, it looks like it's perfect for you and you email, you call and you get no response back.

I totally understand how frustrating that can be for somebody looking for an apartment, but at the same time, as somebody on the other end, the property manager or the landlord, when you're being inundated with hundreds of calls or emails, it really is tough to get back to everyone in a timely period, especially when your first five calls or emails might be really well qualified candidates for the apartment and it might already be gone. They just haven't had a chance to take it down. So any way that somebody can find to establish a local in-person contact is by far the best route, whether it's a coworker, family, friends, property manager, anything.

Stephen Wershing ([14:17](#)):

Any associations or organizations that people could tap into that might be able to refer them to a few property managers?

Adrian Winter ([14:26](#)):

There is in the city of Rochester, we do have, several actually, little landlord groups that we have where people bounce ideas off each other and that type of thing. So really, if you can get in touch with any of the handful of local landlords or property managers, that's a great way. But I would say if you're moving to the area and you don't know anybody locally, you're coming for work, those are very common situations. I would say for sure to talk to some coworkers or your supervisor or anything like that. See if they know anybody and if not, start looking online, obviously, and a lot of times you can find, whether it's on Zillow or any of the bigger websites, if you find a building or a specific apartment building that you like, which has several apartments in it, a lot of times you can find the company or, for example, the contact of that property manager or landlord, and try and reach out to them and hope that they're not being inundated with a ton of responses for those specific units.

Stephen Wershing ([15:59](#)):

Okay. You've reminded me of something else you were saying, you find something online, you see the pictures, you really like the pictures. I've heard, and you can correct me if this is not right, but I've heard that one of the things people need to watch out for is that there are also some scam artists, some people who will post something and then they'll try to get a deposit from you. Is this something people should worry about and how do they protect themselves from it?

Adrian Winter :

So essentially, really one of the worst things that somebody can do is to send funds, send a bank transfer, a wire transfer, anything like that, or even sending a check in the mail to a prospective landlord, property manager, management company, anything like that. If you have not seen the apartment in person, if you have not had a phone conversation, FaceTime, anything like that with the prospective landlord or property manager do not send funds ever. Anybody that's asking for funds up front

without showing an apartment, even a video tour or a walkthrough, anything like that is most likely trying to take advantage of people.

Stephen Wershing :

Let's say that you are time-constrained and you're going to have difficulty in a competitive market place to get there and see apartments, is there anything besides face to face that doesn't expose people to too much risk or do they really just need to [inaudible 00:01:20] personally?

Adrian Winter :

So you do not necessarily need to meet physically in person, like you said, you brought up a great point with people's work schedules, timeframes for things. A lot of times, if an apartment was just posted it will go in a day or two. So for some reason, if you just can't make it to see it in person, your schedules don't line up with the landlord or the property manager, I don't think that you should immediately consider or have any red flags or anything like that because it's not always the case. But I would definitely ask for if you're able to do a FaceTime showing or a video chat, something on Zoom, anything like that with the landlord or property manager, do that. Or at least ask for if they can send a video walkthrough, if they can text you that or if they can email you that video just so you can at least have some sort of visualization just for your own sake, whether it's the layout of the apartment and everything like that just one more layer of protection for yourself to ensure that you're not being taken advantage of.

Stephen Wershing :

What would most landlords ask of you to be able to lock up an apartment for you? What's reasonable to expect a landlord would ask if you say I see it, I love it, I can't get there just yet, but what would be reasonable for them to ask and what would be excessive that should send up [inaudible 00:03:01].

Adrian Winter :

Sure. I think a reasonable accommodation from a landlord's perspective, because like you said, a lot of times they're getting a lot of responses for these apartments. So a lot of times just from the landlord's point of view, they need to know that somebody if they are serious or not about the apartment. For us personally, we will usually request that they fill out a rental application so we have their information. And from our point of view, what we usually look for is we will run a standard credit check and we will usually if we can try to contact previous landlords or references just to verify, especially if we can't meet somebody in person, just to verify that they are who they say they are. But I would say nothing really further more with that unless you're moving forward with the apartment, you want to sign a lease. I wouldn't send any copies of identification or anything like that unless you're to the point where you're ready to sign a lease with somebody and put a security deposit down.

Stephen Wershing :

Okay. So you find a place and you get a lease, how do you establish a good relationship with a landlord once you know where you're going to be and who you're going to rent from?

Adrian Winter :

Sure. In terms of getting to a good point with your landlord or your property manager off the bat, the biggest thing I would say is to just, and this goes for both parties as well, the landlord or property manager and the tenant is communication in general. Just any issues with the apartment or anything that you want to establish right off the bat before you move in, whether it has to be with pets or emotional sport animals or anything like that, clear everything up with your landlord upfront even before you sign the lease.

A lot of times I've seen where somebody a tenant might be nervous or anxious about bringing up that they have an emotional sport animal or something like that so they decide to not say anything, then they sign the lease and the lease says no pets or something like that, and then they tell the landlord afterwards, that's just an example. But just be upfront with everything right off the bat, that's going to just make the relationship much smoother I think as a whole in general.

Stephen Wershing :

Okay. And then when you move in and so you're currently renting, how do you maintain a good relationship with your landlord? What kinds of things should you expect from a landlord and what kinds of things would a landlord be expecting from you?

Adrian Winter :

Sure. Similar type of response, but it goes both ways, I think it starts with respect on both ends. I have always found that if tenants are honest with us, if they're upfront, if they communicate well then regardless you will get the same level of everything back to you as well. I think that tenants just the same as landlords, but everybody needs to manage expectations. There's going to be certain scenarios that come up and both parties need to be able to handle them respectfully. There's going to be certain scenarios where a tenant might be a couple days late on rent, which is understandable, things happen in life.

But there's going to be certain scenarios where at the same time a tenant might want a specific maintenance request or something done. And they might not understand all of the background things, whether it's several maintenance personnel are out sick, or there's a big emergency or a water leak at another property and kind of all of our maintenance resources are going there for the day. So it's really just communication and both parties understanding that things happen. But as long as the relationship is solid and the communication is there everything will be handled in a timely manner.

Stephen Wershing :

Okay. So renters insurance, what are your thoughts about whether somebody should have it and what might be in there?

Adrian Winter :

I think renters insurance is one of the best things that a tenant can do just to ensure they give themselves a piece of mind for their own personal belongings, but also for all parties to be protected. If there is ever, hopefully it never happens, but a major incident, whether it's a big leak, water damage, a fire, anything like that, good landlords will take care of their tenants, obviously. But in specific situations, whether it's the property owners insurance or anything like that, there's always gray areas and fine print in those contracts. And it just can't be guaranteed that every item is going to be covered in a situation like that.

So it's just an extra layer of security, an extra coverage blanket for tenants, whether it's any major incidents that come up like that or theft obviously. Hopefully it never happens, but I always strongly, strongly encourage all tenants to look into renters insurance. And it's actually a very cost effective option too, most tenants I've found can roll it into their car insurance or anything like that, and it's usually around I think \$100 a year.

Stephen Wershing :

Okay. Great. That sounds affordable.

Adrian Winter :

Yes.

Stephen Wershing :

So Adrian, here on 30 Minute Money, we're real big on 30 minute action lists. So if somebody is thinking about moving within Rochester or if they're thinking about moving to Rochester, what are the things they should put on their 30 minute action list today?

Adrian Winter :

Yeah. So I think that the most important things, number one is to narrow down the neighborhoods that you want to live in. More importantly even, narrow down where you don't want to live. If you can just completely eliminate a few neighborhoods or circle several neighborhoods that you know that you want to live in, that's going to eliminate a lot of headaches and it's really going to make the whole process easier. In terms of the next item, I would say, know your budget, understand that budget. Set a number for yourself and do not go over it. Incorporate things like parking, utilities, laundry, all of those things, and have that incorporated into your number, so that you know what that max number is and you're not going to put yourself in an uncomfortable situation with that.

And then I would say really, set a goal, whether it's five or six places, something like that, that you can schedule to take a look at. Don't fall in love with

the first place. There's a good chance that you might not even hear back from that landlord or property manager because they're inundated. So have at least five, six places lined up that you can look at in those neighborhoods that we discussed. And then really, maybe the most important thing is to try and find a local contact, like we discussed earlier, whether it's through a friend that has a good landlord or property manager, family, coworkers, new coworkers that can set you up with their landlord perhaps, anything that can get your foot in the door, so you have a local person that you can call, text, email. Really, anything like that is going to help a ton.

Stephen Wershing :

That sounds great. Well, Adrian, this has been very helpful. A lot of really good ideas in here. I appreciate it.

Adrian Winter :

Yes.

Stephen Wershing :

If people want to find you and talk more about that, where can they contact you?

Adrian Winter :

Yes. So email is a great way to contact me. My email, it's [adrian@marksiwec.com](mailto:adrian@marksiwec.com). We can get that in your description. I'm sure they can reach out to me via my cell number as well, which we can put in the description as well. Or just the Mark Siwec Team website, all of my information is on there as well, obviously under property manager.

Stephen Wershing :

That sounds great. And we'll make sure that we put all that contact information in the notes because I would bet 99% of the people who listen will not know how to spell Siwec.

Adrian Winter :

[crosstalk 00:03:02] Exactly.

Stephen Wershing :

So come to the website, you will find it there. It's spelled funny. So just be ready for that.

Adrian Winter :

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes, sir.

Stephen Wershing :

Adrian, thanks so much for joining us today and thanks for being our guest on 30 Minute Money.

Adrian Winter :

No, thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.