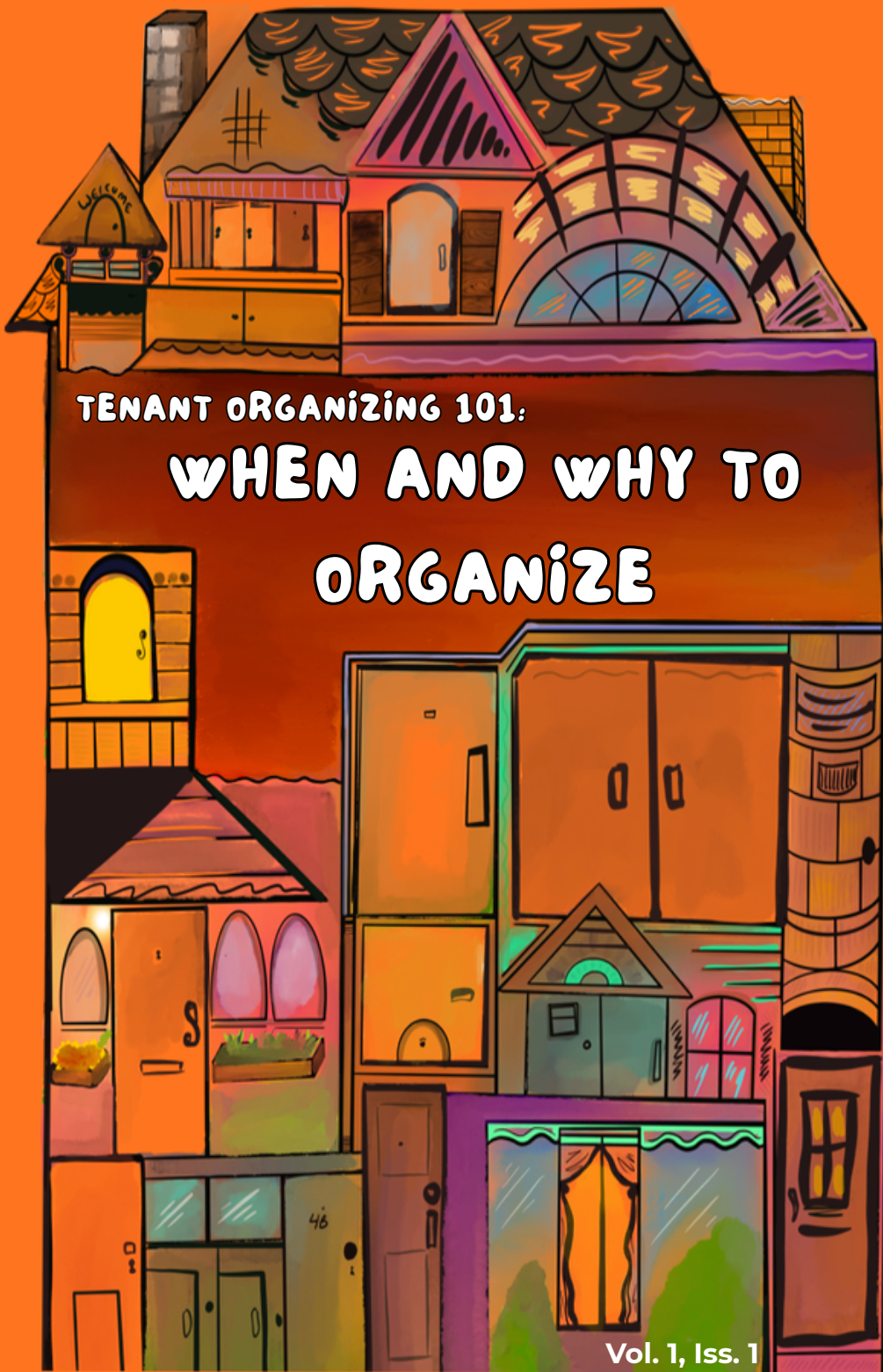






TENANT ORGANIZING 101:

WHEN AND WHY TO ORGANIZE

Vol. 1, Iss. 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our deepest gratitude to our illustrators and designers: **Briauna Williams and Udeshi Basu this guide was transformed by your creative vision**

Collaboration with artists was supported by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs with the University of Minnesota.



While backed by non-profit institutions, these zines were compiled by a group of renters working for our collective liberation.

May we bring forward a better future for us all.

Our rights as renters are protected under
Minnesota Statute 504B.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

v1

- When And Why to Organize
- How To Build Your Team
- Hosting Your First Meeting

v2

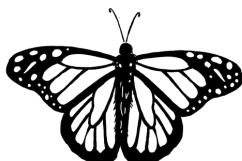
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v3

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These guides are built to be interactive and kept as
documentation of your experiences while organizing.
Write in them! Share with your community!

DOOR KNOCKING

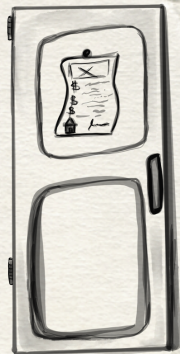
Going to a person's front door opens up space to make an intentional connection. Meeting someone at their door opens up the chance for them to ask questions and get answers about topics they may be interested in, but haven't sought out information on.

If you're new to door-knocking, or feeling nervous about door-knocking for a new goal, it's a good idea to practice the interaction with a trusted co-collaborator beforehand. This will give you the chance to identify what your intention is for the conversation, give you confidence to keep someone's attention, and make it easier to remember what you're there to talk about.

A basic script consists of:

- introduction
- information on goal
- an ask
- material drop-off and exit

**SAMPLE DOOR KNOCKING
SCRIPT HERE!**





intro

Because of the imbalance of power that landlords have over tenants, sometimes it takes the action of an organized group of tenants to make your voices heard.

While a landlord may find it easy to ignore individual tenant demands, a group of tenants speaking with one voice can exert collective power and pressure.

**IF THERE IS A PROBLEM THAT A SINGLE TENANT
THINKS IS SERIOUS,
OTHERS WILL LIKELY SHARE THAT SAME CONCERN.**



WHAT IS A TENANT ASSOCIATION?

Tenant associations are building, neighborhood, or geography-based organizations made up of tenants who organize together to build power.

Generally, tenant associations:

- Use collective political, economic, legal, and social pressures to **overcome recurring problems**.
- Organize because they agree there is a **commonly shared issue** that their collective actions can address.
- Help **build strong relationships between neighbors** and stronger communities, creating meaningful support systems for individuals and families.
- Often host social events, celebrations, and resource fairs, bringing neighbors together regularly to get to know one another and **experience joy outside of the struggle**.

Note: The term tenant association is used interchangeably with the terms *tenant union*, *resident association*, *renters association*, and *renters union*. You can use whatever terms feel best for your group. *Tenant association* is used in this guide because it reflects the terms used in some legal contexts and existing laws.



All tenants deserve safe, affordable and decent housing. There are many laws in Minnesota meant to protect your rights as tenants, but first you have to know what your community is up against.

Common problems that tenants organize around can include:

- Emergency repairs: loss of essential services such as heat, running water, electricity
- Privacy violations
- Third party utility billing miscalculations
- Building sales or threats to affordable housing
- Poor management and record-keeping
- Discrimination and access needs



RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

504B.212

As of January 2025, every tenant in the state of Minnesota has the right to organize and form tenant associations with their neighbors!



**HOW TO FORM
A TENANT
ASSOCIATION!**



PROTECTED ACTIVITIES

Renters have the right to form a tenant association, work with community organizers, and take collective action to hold landlords accountable. Protected actions include: contacting neighbors door-to-door or electronically, holding meetings within the rental building, and publicly posting tenant association information within a rental building.

PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

According to the law, landlords may not increase rent, decrease services, alter the rental agreement, contact state or federal law enforcement in regards to a tenant's immigration status, or threaten such actions in part or in whole because of a tenant engaging in protected activities.

Reasons You Might

Organize

GUT FEELING THAT SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT

Maybe there are confusing, unexplained charges on your rent ledger, long delays in repairs, or an upcoming change in management or ownership.

Sometimes these less urgent problems can give you time to talk to your neighbors and strategize for long-term solutions.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

You may start organizing within your building because you want a stronger sense of community. This could look like organizing an exercise group or community garden – a space where you and your neighbors can get to know one another. An informal space like this lets relationships and trust develop naturally so that when problems arise, you have already started developing a base of people to work with.

IMMEDIATE REACTION TO SERIOUS PROBLEM

You and your neighbors may quickly organize to minimize damage from a burst pipe and push for a quick response time from your landlord. This can be very effective in the short term, but is usually not sustainable once the problem is solved.



THE MORE WE KNOW, THE STRONGER WE ARE!

THE FIRST STEP IS TO KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Learning about your rights and responsibilities as a renter is essential to address your housing issue and to build collective power. This will help you determine if your landlord is doing something illegal and if you are following your responsibilities.

Most importantly, you might find out that the issue you are facing is difficult to address through legal action. You might learn that the issues you feel **SHOULD** be against the law **ARE NOT**. This means organizing around the issue might be the only way to address it.

