



## City of Tacoma

From: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh, Chair of the Community Vitality and Safety Committee, and Lynda Foster, Senior Council Policy Analyst

To: Mayor and Council

Copies to: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Hyun Kim, Deputy City Manager; Allyson Griffith, Interim Deputy City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney

**Topic: Requesting feedback to inform Community, Vitality and Safety Committee's policy review of adopting the International Property Maintenance Code – May 6, 2025**

Date: May 1, 2025

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### BACKGROUND

The phrase "Code compliance" can refer to enforcement of different parts of the Tacoma Municipal Code. The Community, Vitality and Safety committee is reviewing the code for these specific areas:

- TMC 2.01 - Minimum Building & Structures Code
- TMC 8.30 - Public Nuisances
- TMC 8.30A - Chronic Public Nuisances
- TMC 8.122 - Noise Enforcement
- TMC 5.30 - Poultry & Pigeons

While this process is underway, staff are pursuing short-term opportunities to improve the code enforcement system. PDS is in the processing of switching the City's workload management software to PDS's cloud based Accela program. This provides instant access to records, photos, and other compliance related information. As part of the transition and merging of groups, PDS is also modifying various business processes to streamline and provide a more efficient enforcement pathway. This includes continuous improvement initiatives to align the Permit Compliance and Code Compliance teams.

### POLICY REVIEW AT COMMUNITY, VITALITY AND SAFETY COMMITTEE:

The Community, Vitality and Safety Committee is reviewing an update to the City's Code compliance processes. Past presentations on this topic occurred as follows:

- [2/9/2023](#): Code Compliance Overview
- [7/23/2023](#): Minimum Building and Structures Code Compliance Update
- [5/23/24](#): Tacoma Municipal Code - Nuisance Code Chapter 8.30 Review
- [6/27/2024](#): Nuisance Code Review - Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 8.30
- [10/24/2024](#): Nuisance Code Review - Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 8.30
- [4/10/25](#): International Property Maintenance Code Implementation Consideration

Starting in 2025, code compliance work was shifted from Neighborhood and Community Services to Planning and Development services. PDS updated CVS on the proposed adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to replace and consolidate multiple sections of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC). This comprehensive approach aims to combine the current Tacoma Municipal Nuisance Code (TMC 8.30) and Title 2 Chapter 2.0 Minimum Building and Structures Code, along with relevant sections from Title 5 (including noise, parking, and health and sanitation provisions). The

presentation outlined the benefits of adopting the IPMC, including alignment with surrounding municipalities and creating efficiencies in code enforcement processes. Adopting the IPMC would allow for consolidating approximately 95 percent of these existing codes into one comprehensive framework, streamlining enforcement processes while maintaining local policy authority. The remaining provisions from Title 5 related to noise, parking, and health and sanitation would also be incorporated to ensure all aspects currently enforced by Code Compliance are contained within a single, unified code.

#### **THE ISSUE:**

The IPMC leaves the scope of penalties and fees up to the discretion of the local governing authority adopting the code. The Community, Vitality and Safety Committee membership is seeking feedback from the full Council on enforcement approaches to inform their final recommendation.

#### **STUDY SESSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The following questions touch on areas of interest to CVS members exploring this topic:

1. In what circumstances would it be appropriate for penalties to accelerate or escalate? I.e.:
  - a. Immediate threats to health, life, or safety of the public (current penalty may be waived if voluntary compliance is achieved).
  - b. Repeat offenses.
  - c. Commercial vs. residential.
  - d. Properties with multiple abatements where we have not recouped costs.
2. In these instances, how far do you see penalties escalating? Examples:
  - a. City of Vancouver ([VMC 22.02.070](#)) In a two year period: 1st offense \$250, additional: \$500, "daily penalty" option. Can also be prosecuted as a misdemeanor.
  - b. City of Bellevue ([1.18.040](#)):
    - i. a. First day of each violation, \$100.00;
    - ii. b. Second day of each violation, \$200.00;
    - iii. c. Third day of each violation, \$300.00;
    - iv. d. Fourth day of each violation, \$400.00;
    - v. e. Each additional day of each violation beyond four days, \$500.00 per day.
  - c. City of Lakewood ([8.16.050](#)) has the authority to enforce codes as misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors or infractions.
  - d. City of Bellingham ([10.28.050](#)) Any person convicted of violating any provision of this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.
3. What situations are not worthy of acceleration? Are there instances where the current level of due process, or even more due process, would be appropriate?
4. What is the right balance of working towards voluntary compliance and ensuring accountability?
  - a. Goals of voluntary compliance include: more equitably code enforcement, minimized cost of enforcement, and reduction of timeline to bring properties into compliance.
  - b. Example: Bellingham BCC [1.18.030](#) codifies requirements for a voluntary correction agreement.