



TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPY: Community, Vitality and Safety Committee members, Vicky McLaurin, Executive Liaison
PRESENTER: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh
SUBJECT: Landlord Fairness Code Initiative Policy Proposal
DATE: November 6, 2025

PRESENTATION TYPE:

Please select the type of presentation you will be making to the Council Committee.
Request for Ordinance

SUMMARY:

Council Member Rumbaugh requests the Committee's approval of a proposed Ordinance amending the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative, and to recommend the proposal to the full City Council.

BACKGROUND:

The 2023 Landlord Fairness Code Initiative, also known as Measure 1, is a ballot measure that passed in the City of Tacoma November 2023 general election. The 2023 Landlord Fairness Code Initiative introduces some new requirements and rules for landlords and tenants in the City of Tacoma. These new requirements went into effect December 8, 2023. The Community, Vitality, and Safety Committee received the following presentations on this topic:

- June 12, 2025: Rental Housing Code and Tacoma and Landlord Fairness Code Initiative Overview,
- Aug 28, 2025: Rental Housing Code and Landlord Fairness Code Initiative Overview, and
- Oct. 9, 2025: Study Group to Assess Effect of Tacoma's New Renter Protection Ordinance Study Results.
- Oct 23, 2025: Landlord Fairness Code Initiative Policy Proposal Discussion

According to the LFCI:

1. The people of the City of Tacoma hereby adopt this citizen initiative for the purpose of protecting families and tenants and reducing homelessness.
 - a. require landlords to comply with tenant protection laws before raising rent or evicting a tenant;
 - b. prohibit unfair or excessive fees;
 - c. require landlords to provide notice of rent increases and pay relocation assistance when significant rent increases require tenants to relocate;
 - d. prohibit certain student/school-year evictions, cold-weather evictions, and evictions based upon a tenant's status as servicemember, first responder, senior, family member, health care provider, or educator; and
 - e. provide penalties and other enforcement mechanisms
2. This measure is designed to protect families, promote community, stabilize the rental market, and reduce homelessness. It is Tacoma's intent to continue its long-term commitment to maintain vibrant and diverse neighborhoods within the City. The regulations contained in this initiative balance the needs of the landlord, tenant, and Tacoma while creating a partnership to ensure safe, healthy, and thriving rental housing in Tacoma. Providing housing for Tacoma residents directly



impacts quality of life at the most basic level and therefore requires regulations to ensure that it is equitably undertaken.

ISSUE:

Since the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative (LFCI) went into effect on December 8, 2023, community members have shared positive and negative feedback about its impacts in Tacoma. CM Rumbaugh met with key stakeholders to gather data and perspective on the LFCI, including:

- Micheal Mirra, Co-convenor of the study group which presented to CVS on October 8, 2025,
 - The Tacoma Housing Authority (two memos with data from THA attached),
 - Tacoma Pro Bono,
 - A court commissioner,
 - The Affordable Housing Consortium,
 - Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce,
 - Representatives of Tacoma for all, and
 - Individual landlords and tenants.
- Requests are out for meetings with the Pierce County Sheriff's office and Fair Housing Washington, and for feedback from South Sound Housing Affordability Partners.

When asked if the measure succeeded at its goal to protect families and reduce homelessness, there was shared agreement that allowing people to stay longer in units without paying rent had the short-term benefit of reducing short-term homelessness when tenants are unable to pay rent. However, there was consistent uncertainty about long-term benefits. Tenants who are being evicted are leaving their housing with larger amounts of debt and the impact of this financial burden could have long-term consequences on tenants' ability to gain housing and be financially stable.

When asked if the measure succeeded at its goal to balance the needs of the landlord, tenant, and Tacoma while creating a partnership to ensure safe, healthy, and thriving rental housing in Tacoma key themes emerged:

- The LFCI is destabilizing the budget of low-income housing providers.
- There has been an increase to the amount of damage to units.
- Landlords are screening tenants more thoroughly, reducing access to the most at-need tenants and leaving units unoccupied longer between tenants.
- Small "mom and pop" landlords are disproportionately burdened by the fiscal impacts of rent being unpaid for long stretches of time.

ALTERNATIVES:

Stakeholders who offered feedback on the LFCI requested many changes to the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative. Feedback collected but not incorporated into CM Rumbaugh's proposal can be found in the "Other items for Committee Discussion" section of the handout for the October 23, 2025, CVS meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Changes to the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative can be incorporated into ongoing budgeted work. Although there is no immediate fiscal impact to adopting this ordinance as proposed, alternatives including enhanced enforcement or other City services may require resourcing.

RECOMMENDATION:

Propose changes to the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative to the full Council for consideration.