



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST (CCR)**

TO: Mayor & City Council

FROM: Council Member Justin Camarata and Council Assistant Lynda Foster

COPIES TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Tadd Wille, Assistant City Manager; Bill Fosbre, City Attorney; Executive Leadership Team; File

SUBJECT: **Researching and proposing options for a Tacoma Renters Commission**

DATE: October 11, 2018

ITEM/ISSUE PROPOSED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:

We ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda at the earliest available meeting of the Study Session:

We respectfully request City Council concurrence to direct the City Manager to: (1) research and develop options for the establishment of a Renters Commission, Task Force, or Advisory Group; and (2) present the options and recommendations to the Community, Vitality & Safety Committee by end of January 2019.

BRIEF BACKGROUND:

Provide context for the issue and explain the need for the request.

More than half of all Tacoma residents are renters. Shelter is a basic human necessity, and with rising rental costs the City of Tacoma, along with many parts of the world, has an affordable housing crisis. Presently, the City of Tacoma does not have a formal, ongoing means of engagement with this section of the population on policy issues affecting them, and the need for such engagement has never been greater.

The City of Tacoma lacks enough affordable, safe, sanitary and high-quality homes for all its residents. Today, nearly 33,000 households in Tacoma pay at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs each month, reducing their ability to pay for other necessities. The greatest need is among households with the lowest incomes and in some cases, with the highest barriers to accessing housing opportunities.

Within Tacoma's rental market, the city experienced a steady increase in median rent between 1990 and 2016—the last year for which data is available from the American Community Survey. Over that time, Tacoma's median rent increased 39 percent, while median household income only increased by 20 percent. A snapshot of shorter-term market trends suggests that a renter looking for a unit could face much steeper costs: For a family looking to rent a single-family home, the median rent increased by 16 percent from March 2016. For a person or family looking to rent a unit in a multifamily apartment building, the median rent increased by 17 percent from March 2016.

These trends have displaced renters throughout Tacoma and have hit critical mass. The City of Tacoma has begun to see mass evictions from apartment complexes seeking to renovate and raise rents. Residents in all 58 units at the Tiki Apartment complex received a notice to vacate on April 5, 2018, which created a housing crises that propelled the City of Tacoma to review the rental housing code.

A core value in Tacoma's strategic vision statement *Tacoma 2025* is equity. Tacoma's diversity is its greatest asset. In an increasingly global marketplace, Tacoma embraces its multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character. Communities of color and immigrant communities are fundamental to Tacoma's entrepreneurial spirit, workforce, and long-term success. In Tacoma, equity and empowerment are top priorities, meaning that all Tacoma residents must have equitable opportunities to reach their full potential and share in the benefits of community progress.

The renter population is representative of many protected classes, including people of color, people living with disabilities, and LGBTQ people, as well as young adults, seniors, low-income people, those paying rent with assistance, those with felony records, and renters who have experienced homelessness. It is critical that the Tacoma City Council seek out ways to elevate these voices that are currently missing from much of the local conversation.

As the City evaluates a proposed Rental Housing Code, and as the Affordable Housing Action Strategy is implemented, meaningfully engaging with tenants who are directly impacted by the changing rental market and by the City's housing policies will give a voice to this majority of the population that currently does not have one.

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

State and briefly explain which strategic policy priority is best aligned to this action. Please remove the statements below you are not directly addressing.

- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PATH:

☒ **Request for policy development and legislation**

This item is best aligned with the purview of the following Council Standing Committee (refer to Council Standing Committee Process Manual):

☒ Community Vitality and Safety

☐ Economic Development

☐ Government Performance and Finance ☐ Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability

☒ **Request for Resolution**

In you have a question related to the Council Consideration Request, please contact Lynda Foster at (253) 591.5166 or Lynda.Foster@CityofTacoma.org.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: _____


Council Member Camarata

SUPPORTING COUNCILMEMBERS SIGNATURES (2 SIGNATURES ONLY)

(Signatures demonstrate support to initiate discussion and consideration of the subject matter by City Council for potential policy development and staff guidance/direction.)

1. 

POS # 3

2. 

POS# 1