



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Tanja Carter, Director, Community and Economic Development (CED)
COPY: Community Vitality and Safety Committee; D'Angelo Baker, Staff Liaison
PRESENTER: ChiQuata Elder, Landlord-Tenant Program Specialist, OEHR
SUBJECT: Overview of Tacoma Municipal Code 1.95, Tacoma Rental Housing Code and Tacoma Municipal Code 1.100, Landlord Fairness Code Initiative
DATE: June 12, 2025

PRESENTATION TYPE:
Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

This presentation will provide an overview of the Rental Housing Code and the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative. This presentation will also provide an update on the implementation of these codes. This presentation will not provide an analysis of the impacts these two codes have had on the rental market.

BACKGROUND:

The Rental Housing Code (RHC), Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) Chapter 1.95 which went into effect on February 1, 2019, and updated with Just Cause Eviction (JCE) standards passed by Council in September 2021.

In the Summer of 2022, City staff, in partnership with the RHC Stakeholder Advisory Group, a multi-organization group consisting of landlords, nonprofits, tenant advocates, and relevant City offices, began working on proposed changes to the RHC. On October 27, 2022, staff presented proposed changes to the Community Vitality and Safety Committee (CVS). After getting additional Council feedback on the proposed changes, staff conducted a community survey that garnered 1270 responses from landlords, tenants, and property managers and hosted a series of informational events that approximately 200 people attended. After conducting community outreach on the proposed changes, the City and the RHC Stakeholder Advisory Group, presented the proposed updates to Council and they were adopted on July 11, 2023, and became effective on July 23, 2023. The update included the following changes:

- Standardized tenant screening
- Added Rental Agreement Regulations
- Deposit requirements and installment payments
- Notice to increase rent requirements
- Late fees
- Shared housing standards
- Compliance and enforcement

Also in summer of 2023, Tacoma For All, a local tenant's rights group, was successful in obtaining enough signatures to have an initiative added to the November 2023 ballot. The initiative was titled the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative (LFCI) and consisted of the following items:

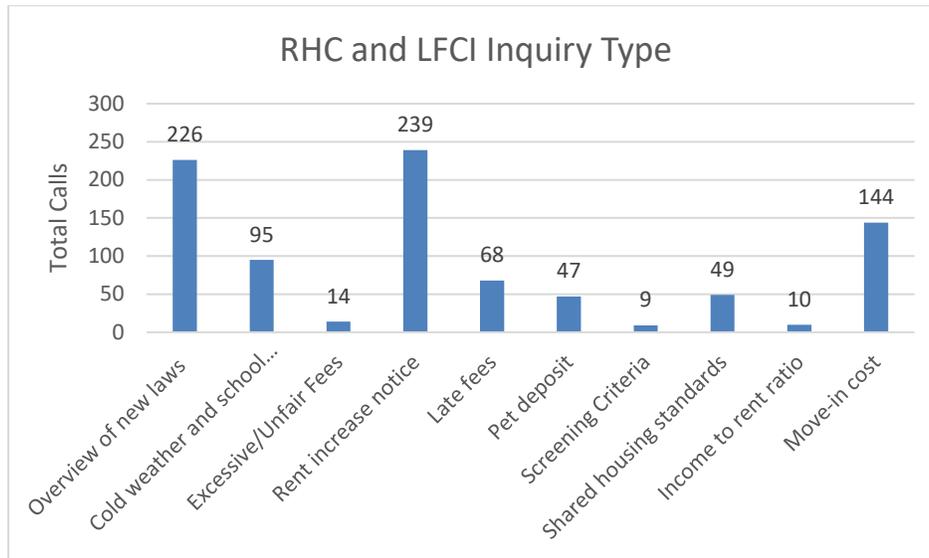
- Requires landlords to comply with tenant protection laws before raising rent or evicting a tenant
- Prohibits unfair or excessive fees
- Relocation assistance when significant rent increases require tenants to relocate
- Prohibits certain winter and school year evictions



The LFCI was passed and went into effect on December 8, 2023

Since December 8, 2023, staff has provided information to both landlords and tenants on their rights and responsibilities under the RHC and LFCI, created and/or updated required forms necessary to implement the codes, tracked the type of information being provide to the community, created standard operating procedures (SOPs), and enforced on violations of the RHC. The attached table highlights key differences between the RHC and LFCI.

From July 24, 2023, to May 31st, 2025, staff has fielded 1729 inquiries to both landlords and tenants on rental housing laws. Of those inquiries 52% (901) were associated to the following:



The City works with landlords to ensure they are complying with the RHC and LFCI. When there is a violation of the RHC, staff has been successful in getting landlords to come into voluntary compliance without initiating the enforcement process. Since August 2023, the enforcement process has only been initiated four times involving violations of the RHC. The types of violations include:

Type of RHC Violation
Failure to provide notice of resource
Improper notice to terminate tenancy
Failure to provide relocation assistance packet
Improper rent increase notice
Retaliation
Health and Safety standards
No rental business license/property not registered
Late Fees



ALTERNATIVES:

- This is an information briefing only. There are no alternatives.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

- This is an information briefing only. There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- This is an information briefing only. There is no recommendation.



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	Jurisdictions				
	Tacoma RHC	Tacoma LFCI	WA State	Seattle	Olympia
Notices for Rent Increases/Relocation Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 days for any amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 210/180- day notice 120/90-day-reminder notice Relocation assistance if rent is increase by 5% or more and the tenant chooses to relocate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90 days 7% cap plus CPI or 10%, whichever is less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 180 days for any amount Economic Displacement Relocation Assistance- Tenant households earning 80% or less of Seattle’s average median income (AMI) that give notice to vacate after receipt of a 10% or more increase will be eligible to apply for financial assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 days for >5% 180 days for >10%
“Late Rent” Fee Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5% of one one’s rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$10 per month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$10 per month
Screening Criteria/Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not require SSN from any applicant May not have a blanket criminal history policy Must use income to rent ratio when screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not require SSN if applicant does not have due to immigration/citizenship status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not screen for criminal history excluding sexual offender records. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Move-in Caps, Pet Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant able to pay move-in cost in installments Pet deposit is refundable and cannot exceed 25% of monthly rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees +deposits may not exceed one month’s rent Pet deposit may not exceed 25% of one month’s rent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees + deposits may not exceed one month’s rent. Non-refundable fee may not exceed 10% of one month’s rent. Pet deposit may not exceed 25% of one month’s rent (may be collected in addition to security deposit). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-refundable fees may not be collected Refundable security deposit may not exceed one month’s rent. Pet deposit may not exceed 25% of one month’s rent (may collect in addition to security deposit).

	Tacoma RHC	Tacoma LFCI	WA State	Seattle	Olympia
Rental Agreement Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the number of legal occupants in unit. Describe uninhabitable spaces Prohibits the landlord from regulating or banning certain breeds unless required by insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Shared Housing Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental agreement must be in writing Master lease holder must provide owner information to the tenants and tenant information to the owner. During eviction process the owner and master lease holder must provide enough copies of notices for sublet tenants Owner must investigate complaints from neighbors and city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a

	Tacoma RHC	Tacoma LFCI	WA State	Seattle	Olympia
Evictions (Cold Weather and School Year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold weather eviction ban- November 1st to April 1st. Creates a defense for eviction tenant households during this period School year eviction ban- Tacoma Public School year. Prohibits evictions based on tenant protected class, military status, senior, health care provider or educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winter eviction protection- December 1st to March 1st. Creates a defense for tenant households at or below 80% of AMI (area median income) during this period School year eviction protection- September to June. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a
Business License/Health and Safety Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord must have a rental business license and property registered to increase rent or terminate tenancy. Rent increases are prohibited if the rental has health and safety issues as outlined in RCW 59.18.060 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord must have a rental business license and property registered to increase rent or terminate tenancy. Termination of Tenancy prohibited if the rental has health and safety issues as outlined in RCW 59.18.060. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlords must register their rental units. Seattle inspects many of their rental units every year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental business license required