



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Mayor & City Council
FROM: Council Member Latasha Palmer and Christina Caan, Policy Analyst
COPIES TO: Hyun Kim, City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney
SUBJECT: **Resolution - recognizing the vital need to ensure rental housing units in Tacoma are kept in good repair; affirming the importance of providing additional education for tenants and landlords on the required standards for rental housing units; committing to explore a proactive code inspection program for rental housing units; and deciding to reexamine the Provisional Rental Property License.**

DATE: June 10, 2026

We ask for your support for a resolution recognizing the importance of ensuring rental housing units in Tacoma are kept in good repair; affirming the need to provide additional education for tenants and landlords on the required standards for rental housing units; committing to explore a proactive code inspection program for rental housing units; and deciding to reexamine the Provisional Rental Property License.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

State and local legal frameworks establish clear standards for maintaining safe and habitable rental housing units.¹ When rental housing units are substandard, landlords and tenants can face a range of significant financial challenges to either repair the property or relocate, as well as negative impacts to their physical and mental health. In addition, substandard rental housing subverts the stability of our residents and impedes the City's work to advance our strategic goals.² This resolution would recognize that the well-being of our residents and Tacoma's overall success are contingent on maintaining safe and healthy living conditions, as well as affirm the need for continuing to educate our community on state and local laws for rental housing units and available support services.

- Enhancing tenant and landlord education could include providing clear guidelines on issues that may constitute a regulatory building code violation, the timeline and steps for navigating a rental housing complaint, and streamlining information currently spread across multiple City webpages to ensure accessibility. Helping landlords and tenants better understand their rights and responsibilities, as well as the availability of support services, may help decrease fears of retaliation for identifying problems.

¹ [WA Residential Landlord-Tenant Act Chapter 59.18 RCW](#); [Chapter 1.95: Rental Housing Code - City of Tacoma, WA](#); [Chapter 1.100: Landlord Fairness Code Initiative - City of Tacoma, WA](#); [Municipal Code - City of Tacoma, WA](#)

² [Tacoma 2035 report.pdf](#)

- While community members can currently search for closed and current code violations for individual rental housing properties through the City’s open data portal, the City does not provide a layer to view and assess all rental housing properties at once.³ Providing this type of layer may help community members and City staff better identify trends in violations or hotspot neighborhoods that can be used to help inform the development of targeted support.

In addition, Tacoma’s complaint-based code enforcement program presents an impediment for ensuring rental housing units are consistently kept in good repair citywide. A complaint-based system results in a low number of inspections, decreasing pressure on some landlords and tenants to maintain safe and habitable standards in their units. This decreased pressure can be compounded when landlords and tenants lack the ability to recognize and report violations due to their inexperience navigating complex government and legal bureaucracy, fear, language barriers, or other issues. This resolution would commit the City Council to exploring proactive code inspection programs that can be managed through a cost recovery model, such as a rental registry.

- Rental registries have demonstrated the ability to spur positive health and safety outcomes for tenants, as well as helping landlords get ahead of issues that can become larger maintenance problems.⁴ For example, in 2024, Seattle’s proactive inspections successfully identified 6,000 maintenance and safety issues, including 1,516 instances of improperly installed electrical equipment or exposed wiring and 1,237 instances of missing or nonfunctioning smoke alarms.⁵

Finally, this resolution would confirm the City Council’s decision to reexamine the Provisional Rental Property License, which should be a key tool for keeping rental housing units safe and habitable. Currently, the City may, but rarely does, place residential property owners with unsafe conditions in their units on a three-year Provisional Rental Property License.⁶ With the upcoming City Council discussion planned for revising the City’s regulatory building standards, there is an opportunity to also enhance the Provisional Rental Property License and improve its effectiveness.

DESIRED RESOLUTION DATE: June 23, 2026

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council Member Latasha Palmer has been meeting with tenants, tenant advisory groups, landlords, and community members to discuss ongoing challenges they face with living conditions in rental housing units. In addition, Council Member Palmer has met with the Community and Economic Development Department, Planning and Development Services Department, TacomaFirst 311, and the City’s Tax and License office to understand the City’s process for managing rental housing issues and possible code violations. As a member of the Community Vitality and Safety Committee, she is also tracking the City’s work regarding the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC).

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Equity and Accessibility: By continuing to enhance education for landlords and tenants, the City can better ensure that all community members have the tools and knowledge needed to maintain safe and healthy living conditions in rental housing units.

³ [Code Violations \(Tacoma\) | Tacoma Open Data](#)

⁴ [Rental Registry - National League of Cities](#)

⁵ [Seattle SDCl - 2024 RRIO Annual Report Final](#)

⁶ [Chapter 6B.165: Provisional Rental Property License - City of Tacoma, WA](#)

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Adopt a proactive code inspection program immediately.	Launching proactive code inspections immediately would better address and prevent deteriorating health and safety standards in rental units.	The City needs additional time to consider the appropriate structure for proactive code inspections under a cost recovery model, along with potential startup costs amid the ongoing 2027-2028 budget discussion.
Revise the Provisional Rental Property License immediately.	The City would be able to create a stronger deterrent and monitoring capability for rental properties with substandard conditions.	In the coming months, the City Council is going to be considering updating current building regulatory standards. Revising the Provisional Rental Property License ahead of this work could result in the need for additional revisions or standards that are not properly aligned with any potential new building regulations.

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

Council Member Palmer intends to hold a series of roundtables to gain stakeholder input on policy pathways for a proactive inspection program and updates to the Provisional Rental Property License as time and resources allow.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION

Sponsors recommend advancing this resolution.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact in adopting this resolution and the work identified will take place as time and resources are available for existing staff. However, the resolution does raise the possibility of potential future fiscal impacts regarding a proactive inspection program and enhancements to the Provisional Rental Property License.

If you have a question related to the Council contingency fund request, please contact Christina Caan, Policy Analyst, at (253) 219-0679 or ccaan@tacoma.gov.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY:



Council Member Latasha Palmer

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES

1. Andres Ibsen POS# Mayor

2. Jain POS# 3