



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster
COPY: City Clerk and City Council
SUBJECT: **Ordinance – Amending Chapter 1.95 and Chapter 1.100 of the Tacoma Municipal Code – December 2, 2025**
DATE: November 25, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance amending Chapter 1.95, Rental Housing Code, and Chapter 1.100, Landlord Fairness Code Initiative, of the Municipal Code, by amending various sections, to implement updates relating to landlord-tenant issues as recommended by the Community, Vitality, and Safety Committee, effective January 1, 2026.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Council Members Diaz, Rumbaugh, Sadalge and Walker.

BACKGROUND:

The Community, Vitality, and Safety Committee recommended amendments to the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative at their Nov. 6, 2025, special meeting, and considered additional policy recommendations at the Nov. 18, 2025, Council Study Session.

Background

The 2023 Landlord Fairness Code Initiative (LFCI), also known as Measure 1, is an initiative petition that Tacoma voters passed as a ballot measure in the November 2023 General Election. Effective December 8, 2023, the LFCI introduced new requirements and rules for landlords and tenants in the City of Tacoma. 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,
- 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, and
- Nov. 6, 2025: Landlord Fairness Code Initiative Policy Proposal request for action.

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.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

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. The Chair of the Community, Vitality and Safety Committee 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,
- Tacoma Pro Bono,
- A court commissioner,
- The Affordable Housing Consortium,
- YWCA,
- Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce,
- South Sound Housing Affordability Partners,
- Representatives of Tacoma for all, and
- Individual landlords and tenants.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)*

Eviction has equity impacts. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, children represented more than 40% of all individuals who face eviction throughout the course of a year. Most at risk of eviction are Black renters, who made up less than a fifth of renters across the country but accounted for more than half of evictions. The data revealed that one in five Black renters were filed against and that one in 10 were evicted. In contrast, just one in 24 white renters were filed against, and one in 40 were evicted. Rates of both filings and evictions for Hispanic and Asian renters were comparable to those of white renters.

Access to low-income housing also is an equity issue. In Tacoma, we also see people of color utilizing low-income housing options at a higher rate. Compared to the racial demographics in City of Tacoma, the Tacoma serves a higher proportion of Black or African American (9.4% and 28.3%, respectively) and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander households (1.0% and 2.2%).

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity*

Increase the percentage of people relocating to the city and affordability of housing compared to neighboring jurisdictions.

Livability: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity*

Increase the number of Complete Compact Communities/ 20-Minute Neighborhoods throughout the city.

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

Decrease the percentage of individuals who are spending more than 45% of income on housing and transportation costs.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s)?

Research and outreach to stakeholders across the rental system in Tacoma identified key areas where the LFCI was having unintended consequences. 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; and landlords with fewer units are disproportionately burdened by the fiscal impacts of rent being unpaid for long stretches of time. CVS recommended a narrow range of changes to the LFCI targeting these issues.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
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1. Take no action	Allow time for further review and deliberation, and a comprehensive incorporation of the LFCI into the RHC.	The LFCI has many unintended consequences that urgently need to be addressed.
2. Adjust details for exemptions to eviction defenses or set eviction prohibitions	Could create better outcomes for individual situations	The exemptions are proposed to reach a balanced rental housing system for all of Tacoma
3. Provide more exemptions to the school-year eviction defense	Tailoring the school-year eviction defense may better balance in the rental housing market.	Policy discussions would benefit from more study to understand the full impact of changes.
4. Include more “just cause” eviction options in exemptions to the eviction defense	State law and the RHC outline just causes for eviction, landlords request more flexibility evict.	Policy discussions would benefit from more study to understand the full impact of changes.
5. Adjust details in the LFCI – such as removing relocation assistance when rents are raised more than 5% or allowing for higher move in fees	Offer balance to landlords absorbing more financial risk due to LFCI eviction defense opportunities for tenants.	Increase costs and risk to tenants.
6. Repeal the entire LFCI	State law and the RHC offer tenant protections balanced against the needs of the rental-housing system.	Does not include eviction defense, as strict of restrictions on rent increases, and other tenant-focused policy.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The Community, Vitality, and Safety Committee’s 2026 workplan will include the following topics stakeholders requested the City Council consider:

- Bundle LFCI into RHC so there is one code where constituents can find all landlord-tenant items. Revisit Nov. 6 CVS conversation on:
 - Review exemptions to eviction defenses for when tenants damage the unit
 - School year eviction defense
- Tenant rights outreach and education
- Landlord education and licensing requirements
- Penalties and enforcement for predatory landlords
- Health & safety conditions in units
- Accessible income restricted housing options
- Mediation or community court-like programs to assist with landlord/tenant conflicts
- Tools for renters to end a lease early should they lose income
- Rental assistance
- Landlord insurance for damaged units and unpaid rent

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

Sponsors recommend moving forward with amending Chapter 1.95 Rental Housing Code and Chapter 1.100 Landlord Fairness Code Initiative of the Tacoma Municipal Code to further the goals of the LFCI: to protect families, promote community, stabilize the rental market, and reduce homelessness; to continue its long-term commitment



to maintain vibrant and diverse neighborhoods within the City; and to balance the needs of the landlord, tenant, and Tacoma while creating a partnership to ensure safe, healthy, and thriving rental housing in Tacoma.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Changes to the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative can be incorporated into ongoing budgeted work. There is no immediate fiscal impact to adopting this ordinance as proposed. However, the alternatives to the proposed ordinance including enhanced enforcement (see Alternatives Section above) may require financial resources.

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?

N/A

Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?

No

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

No

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

No

ATTACHMENTS:

- Ordinance