

What is the intent of the new landlord-tenant ordinance?

The intent of the landlord-tenant ordinance passed by the City Council in March 2023 is to require business licenses for owners/operators of rental properties, to create a rental registry, and to re-iterate existing standards and habitability expectations and enforcement mechanisms for rental housing in the City of Spokane. The ordinance is focused on preserving housing stock, maintaining safe living spaces, and creating and maintaining a database to track the rental units in our community.

For full details, see the ordinance: <https://my.spokanecity.org/smc/?Chapter=10.57>

When does the new program launch?

The programs described in the ordinance are being created. Business licenses for rental properties can be obtained through the [Washington State Department of Revenue](#), but the local registry itself will need to be developed. There will be more information provided on the registry specifics as it becomes available. Code Enforcement anticipates that the program will be operational by the deadline stated in the ordinance of Jan. 1, 2024. In the meantime, Code Enforcement will continue to respond to complaints for substandard conditions at properties across the city, including rental properties. Complaints can be submitted using [311](#). If you're unable to process your request online for any reason, you can also call 3-1-1, or 509-755-CITY (2489), from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and they can assist with filling a complaint on your behalf.

How do I register?

The registry will be a public-facing online portal that will be developed by City staff for the [Code Enforcement website](#). More information about the registry process and portal will be provided as it is available. The registration process will require property information, ownership and management information, business license number, payment of fees, etc.

What is the cost?

The ordinance establishes a business license requirement for all rental properties in the City of Spokane. The business license has an annual fee of \$127, according to [SMC 08.02.0206 \(A\)](#). Additionally, the ordinance establishes a \$15 per rental unit fee that will be paid as a part of the rental registry application.

The initial inspection and initial re-inspection (if needed) that are conducted by Code Enforcement staff will not have a fee. However, if subsequent inspections are needed at specific properties due to violations not being adequately addressed, additional safety inspection fees may be assessed.

Does Code Enforcement already do these inspections?

Yes, Code Enforcement investigates substandard buildings in the City of Spokane. These investigations apply to all types of buildings and uses, including rental properties. The inspection process is not new as a part of this ordinance, but the rental-specific programming and dedicated staffing is new.

What are the standards or deficiencies that Code Enforcement inspects for?

The substandard building criteria that Code Enforcement utilizes during inspections is detailed in SMC 17F.070.400. The deficiencies include issues such as inadequate weatherproofing, defective/inoperable plumbing, and inoperable or inadequate heating system. For the full list, see [the code](#). Code Enforcement will provide education and resource materials to the public as they are developed, including an inspection checklist.

I'm a tenant, how do I submit a complaint?

Complaints can be submitted using the City's [311 system](#). This type of case should be originated as a code/zoning complaint. Code Enforcement staff will contact the complainant to coordinate an inspection to observe the deficiency. Should a violation be observed, notice of violation would be sent to property owners/managers to get the issue repaired. If you're unable to process your request online for any reason, you can also call 3-1-1, or 509-755-CITY (2489), from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and they can assist with filling a complaint on your behalf.

My rental property is old, and I'm worried that it won't pass inspection. What should I expect?

The intent of the program is to maintain existing buildings in a safe and habitable condition, as they were constructed. This ordinance did not implement new codes or standards that older buildings have to comply with. Rather, the ordinance establishes a registry and mechanism for more inspections to occur to ensure that existing minimum habitability and maintenance standards that are currently in place are complied with. An inspection of an older building would not note deficiencies just based on its era or the age of the building components, only if those systems were dilapidated, not functioning, dangerous, etc.

What if I need to do repairs? Do I need to obtain permits for repairs at my rental property?

While some types of maintenance work does not require permits, many repairs do require permits and inspection to verify code compliance. Contact the Development Services Center at 509-625-6300 for more information. More information can also be found here:

[Business & Development Residential Services - City of Spokane, Washington \(spokanecity.org\)](#)

[Business & Development Commercial Services - City of Spokane, Washington \(spokanecity.org\)](#)

Repairs should be completed in a professional manner and as timely as possible, as deferred maintenance and unpermitted work complicates resolution of existing building deficiencies.

What resources are available for tenants and landlords?

Staff is developing resource and educational materials throughout the year as the program is created. Resource and educational materials will be available in the coming months and will be posted to the [Code Enforcement page](#).

If you have additional questions, call 3-1-1, or 509-755-CITY (2489), from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday or email us at My311@spokanecity.org.