

Tenant Protection Legislation

The Mayor directed the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to develop an ordinance that amends the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) in order to strengthen protections for renter households that live in substandard dwelling units and/or experience other prohibited landlord-led actions. The proposed ordinance is designed to:

1. Prohibit landlords from increasing the rents charged for substandard dwelling units until the deficiencies in the units are corrected. Substandard dwelling units would be defined as units that do not comply with the requirements of the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance Checklist (SMC 22.214.050.M).
2. Clarify and enhance protections for tenants who experience prohibited landlord-led actions (e.g., retaliation for submitting complaints).
3. Transfer primary City responsibility for enforcing against prohibited acts by landlords and tenants from the Seattle Police Department (SPD) to SDCI.
4. Enable SDCI to take enforcement action against landlords that do not provide at least 60 days' notice before applying a rent increase of 10% or more (existing SMC requirement) by making such conduct a prohibited act under the SMC. Violations of this law are currently considered civil matters between landlords and tenants.
5. Add a definition of "housing costs" to the Housing Code.
6. Streamline the penalty structure for violations of the Housing Code.