



## **INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Planning and Community Development Committee

**FROM:** Nora Gierloff, Community Development Director  
Nick Waggood, Building Official

**BY:** Joseph Mose, Code Enforcement Officer  
Wally Snover, Code Enforcement Officer  
Amy Wardian, Code Enforcement Administrative Support  
Lori Solberg, Administrative Support Coordinator

**CC:** Mayor Thomas McLeod

**DATE:** February 4, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Code Enforcement & Rental Housing Program Update

### **ISSUE**

Provide an annual update on Code Enforcement activity and review the Rental Housing Program's background and current activity.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Tukwila Code Enforcement team works to support a safe, inviting, and healthy environment for residents, businesses, and visitors by enforcing the parts of the Tukwila Municipal Code that relate to conditions on private property. Compliance is typically reached through promoting public awareness, communication, and collaboration. In difficult cases monetary penalties and/or legal action may be required. In addition to general code enforcement, the team is also responsible for managing and administering the Residential Rental Business License and Inspection Program.

The city established the Rental Program in 2010 to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring the proper maintenance of rental housing. It does this by identifying and requiring correction of substandard housing conditions and by preventing conditions of deterioration and blight that could adversely impact the quality of life in the City of Tukwila.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Rental Housing Business Licensing and Inspection Program:**

Tukwila Municipal Code Chapter 5.06 establishes regulations pertaining to rental housing licensing and inspection. Residential rental properties are required to obtain an annual rental business license. As of January 28, 2025, the Rental Housing Program has 4,608 registered rental units and 560 active rental licenses (one license per property) and 309 properties have renewed their 2025 rental licenses. Late fees begin March 1 at a rate of \$10 per month until the license is renewed.

#### **Rental Inspections:**

In addition to annual licensing, all rental housing units in the city must pass an inspection every 4 years. This allows the city to catch and correct health and safety violations that otherwise tenants might be reluctant to report due to language barriers or fear of retaliation by landlords.

The purpose of the periodic inspections is to ensure that all rental units are safe, healthy, and suitable for occupancy. The inspectors check for properly working door locks, functional appliances, windows that are intact and that open, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, adequate emergency escape routes, mold, and other items. Some of the most common maintenance items that we find during inspections are improperly installed and maintained water heaters, water leaks, and missing or inoperable carbon monoxide or smoke detector(s).

Properties with up to 12 units may use a city inspector (code enforcement officer) while all larger properties must use a private inspector who meets specific qualifications. The city may also inspect units in response to complaints and audit inspections submitted by private inspectors if the quality of the inspections is in question. In 2024 we did 9 courtesy inspections; 6 of those failed, 4 have been brought into compliance.

The rental program continues to show its effectiveness in improving housing quality in the city. During the program's first round of inspections from 2010-2014 we found many properties with deferred maintenance and poor living conditions that the City was able to require landlords to fix. Now we are seeing an increased number of units fail after we paused inspections and gave a 2-year extension due to Covid.

#### 2022

- Inspections began again in March of 2022. In 2022, the city conducted 105 inspections; 29 properties failed, all have been brought into compliance.

#### 2023

- In 2023, the city inspector conducted 137 inspections; 42 properties failed, currently 33 of those properties have been brought into compliance.

#### 2024

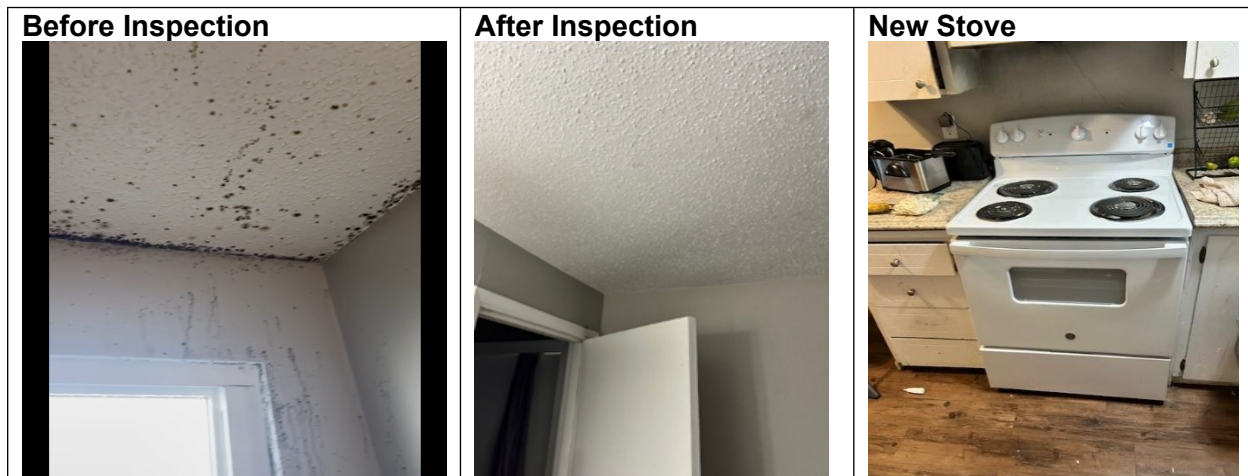
- In 2024, the city conducted 151 inspections; 42 properties failed, 20 have currently been brought into compliance.

#### 2025

- In 2025, 134 licenses (676 rental units) are due for their next inspection; of those 13 properties will be inspected by a private inspector.
  - As of now, in 2026, 99 licenses (510 units) will be due for inspection.

#### **RENT14-0524: 14438 59th Ave S #22:**

On December 7, 2024, the Rental Housing Team received a tenant complaint regarding severe mold issues in the bedroom and bathroom. After initiating a courtesy inspection, the property was visited on December 13, 2024, and discovered additional deficiencies, including a completely inoperable oven and stove that had been out of order for several months, forcing the family to rely on a gas burner, which I strongly advised against using indoors. The inspection confirmed the presence of mold and other issues. Following the inspection, a detailed report was sent to the property owner and management. They promptly complied, completing all necessary repairs and replacing equipment in a timely manner, ensuring the home met safety and habitability standards.

**Current Code Enforcement activity:**

Two code enforcement officers are primarily responsible for code enforcement activities though they and the rental housing inspector are cross trained and cover each other's functions when needed.

**2024**

- In 2024, 363 cases were opened and 329 were closed. The most common case types were Overgrowth (16.5%), Building permit required (14.6%), and garbage/rubbish (11.6%).
- Case growth has gone up 25% between 2023 (289 new cases) and 2024 (363 new cases) while staffing has remained the same.

Here are some examples of some significant 2024 code enforcement cases:

**CE24-0263: 14644 Military Rd S:**

On October 9, 2024, the Tukwila Police Department contacted code enforcement about a job trailer where a warrant had been served due to illegal activities. The structure, deemed unsafe and used for housing, was part of a site known for drug distribution. Collaborating with police officers, several arrests were made, and the area was secured. Code Enforcement worked with the property owner and manager to remove tons of junk and garbage from the lot. The property is now cleared, secured, and actively monitored by both Code Enforcement and the police to ensure continued compliance. Impact Elementary School is adjacent to the site.





**CE24-0264: Illegal Hookah Lounge at Single-Family Residence:**

On October 23, 2024, a complaint led Code Enforcement and the Tukwila Police Department to inspect a single-family rental home suspected of operating as an illegal hookah lounge. The inspection, conducted with the property owner and manager, revealed severe mold, infestations, insufficient plumbing and electrical systems, and illegal subletting by the listed tenant. The downstairs unit was being used as a hookah lounge without proper egress. Due to unsafe conditions, the property was condemned and boarded up pending corrective actions to resolve the extensive safety violations.







**CE24-0270: 14603 35<sup>th</sup> Ave S:**

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, PD contacted code enforcement about people living in a vacant commercial building and doing illegal activities. After we investigated the complaint, code enforcement drove to Seattle and spoke to the property owners about the activities on their property. On October 25<sup>th</sup>, with permission from the property owners code enforcement and PD entered the property and removed the occupants. The owner then came in and removed truckloads of garbage, boarded the building back up, and secured the property from entry.



**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Residential Rental License and Inspection Program YTD revenue for 2025 is \$33,539; YTD revenue for 2024 was \$65,444; 2023 was \$58,442; 2022 was \$44,241.

**2025 RENTAL BUSINESS LICENSE FEES:**

- \$88 for properties with up to four units
- \$229 for properties with 5 to 20 units
- \$287 for properties with 21 to 50 units
- \$357 for properties with 51 or more units

**2025 RENTAL INSPECTION FEES:**

- \$83 per unit up to 4 units; each additional unit, up to 12, is \$39 per unit.

**2024 Business License Emphasis**

In 2024, Code Enforcement launched a cooperative initiative to identify businesses operating without licenses. Through this effort, code enforcement officers identified 21 businesses, with 14 that have since applied for licenses—bringing approximately \$27,700 in additional revenue to the city. This initiative not only supports compliance but also strengthens our local business community and City resources.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Information and discussion only