



Olympia's Response to Homelessness

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Rental Housing Challenges and Changes

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Housing Challenges for Olympia

- Very low vacancy rate (around 2 percent)
- Demand for housing outpaces production: TRPC projects gap of 600 units a year
- Rents are increasing faster than wages
- 46 percent of Thurston County Renters are cost burdened (Department of Commerce, 2015)
- 53 percent of Olympians are renters (TRPC)
- 90,000 new residents moved to state last year, only 45,000 units built (Office of Financial Management)

Causes and Effects of Eviction

- Between 2013 and 2017 1 in 55 renters had an eviction
- Black adults are over represented
- Women are evicted more often than men
- Eviction is linked to poverty and rent burden
 - (Rent burden means you pay more than 30 percent of your income to rent)
- In 2017 46 percent of households were rent burdened – half of those paid more than 50 percent to rent

The State of Evictions: Results from the University of Washington Evictions Project. Thomas, Toomet, Kennedy, Ramiller. 2018. University of Washington. <https://evictions.study/washington/index.html>

July 2019 Changes to Residential Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.18)

Focused on reducing evictions because of links to homelessness

- Pay or vacate now 14 days (previously 3)
- Limit evictions for non-rent charges (not parking, late fees...)
- Require that payments must first be applied to rent
- 60 day notice for most rent increases (up from 30)
- 120 day notice for major renovations
- Landlord can now serve tenant eviction without a judge's permission
- More opportunities for tenancy reinstatement
 - Limits attorneys fees
 - Creates fund for tenants falling behind on rent

Recent Changes in Other Cities

Tumwater Council started discussing a long list of changes, ranked them and shared with Lacey, Thurston County and Olympia last spring.

- **Federal Way** just passed the Stable Homes initiative
- **Burien** City Council passed similar just cause protections, as well as many others, in October
- **Bellingham** added just cause, added 'source of income' protections, and added penalties for landlords who violate the ordinance
- **Seattle** has the state's most extensive tenant protections. Recent protections prevent discrimination against some people with past criminal convictions
- In addition to some of these protections, **Tacoma** has a renter relocation program that helps fund move-in and other costs for some tenants

Protections Requested from Tenants at October Olympia City Council Meeting:

- Require option of installment payments for move-in fees and deposits
- Limits to non-refundable fees, security deposits, and pet deposits
- Penalties for landlords that do not comply
- Prohibition of specific retaliations against tenants