

Some cities and counties have stronger protections for renters

Author

Northwest Justice Project

Last Review Date

May 3, 2025

Washington's Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RLTA) provides some protections for renters across the state. Some cities and counties have enacted ordinances that provide stronger protections for their renters, including caps on late fees and more notice time before rent increases.

1. Fast facts

This guide outlines renter protections in some cities and counties that are stronger than Washington's Residential Landlord-Tenant Act (RLTA), RCW 59.18 (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18>).

Some common city and county tenant protections include:

Late fees

RCW 59.18.170 (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.170>)

prohibits landlords from charging late fees until the rent is more than **5 days** late. There is no statewide cap on late fees. However, some cities and counties have caps on late fees and bans on notice service fees.

Caps on move-in costs

Move-in costs often include deposits, non-refundable fees, and last month's rent. There is no cap on the amount of move-in costs under RCW 59.18.610 (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.610>).

Fees or deposits to hold a rental unit (holding fees) do not count as "move-in costs" but cannot be more than 25% of first month's rent. RCW 59.18.253(3) (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=59.18.253>).

Some cities and counties do cap the amount of move-in costs.

Rent increase notice times

RCW 59.18.140(3)(a) (<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.140>) requires landlords to send a notice of rent increase to tenants **90 days** before the rent increase goes into effect. Exception: In subsidized tenancies where the tenant's portion of rent changes based on income or household, landlords can send rent increase notices **30 days** before they go into effect. RCW 59.18.140(3)(b) (<https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.140>).

Many local laws provide more notice time for rent increases, sometimes 120 or 180 days.

Rent increase bans when repairs are needed

Some cities prohibit landlords from raising the rent or evicting a tenant if the rental unit has habitability issues ("defective conditions" or conditions that "endanger or impair health and safety.")

Usually, the ordinances required the tenant to notify the landlord in writing about the conditions for the ban on rent increases to be in effect.

Rental unit registration and inspection

Many cities required landlords to register their rental units with the city, have a rental business license or both. Some cities required rental unit health and safety inspections or conduct many inspections of the rental units every year.

2. Aberdeen

Rental business license and inspection requirement: In Aberdeen, landlords must get an annual residential rental business license. AMC 5.06.040 (<https://aberdeen.municipal.codes/AMC/5.06.040>). All rental units in Aberdeen must be inspected at least once every 3 years. AMC 5.06.050 (<https://aberdeen.municipal.codes/AMC/5.06.050>) and AMC 5.06.130 (<https://aberdeen.municipal.codes/AMC/5.06.130>).

Late fee cap: In Aberdeen, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of the monthly rent (except this doesn't apply to Section 8 housing, rentals provided by the housing authority or other subsidy provider). AMC 5.06.240(D) (<https://aberdeen.municipal.codes/AMC/5.06.240>).

Rent increase notices: In Aberdeen **mobile home lots**, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% over the amount of rent charged to the tenant for the same unit and services for any period during the previous 12 month. AMC 5.06.240(A). (<https://aberdeen.municipal.codes/AMC/5.06.240>)

3. Bellingham

Rental housing registration and inspection requirement: In Bellingham, landlords must register their rental units. BMC 6.15.040 (<https://bellingham.municipal.codes/BMC/6.15.040>). All rental units in Bellingham must be inspected at least once every 3 years. BMC 6.15.050 (<https://bellingham.municipal.codes/BMC/6.15.050>).

Rent increase notices: In Bellingham, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect. BMC 6.12.020 (<https://bellingham.municipal.codes/BMC/6.12.020>).

Relocation assistance: If the landlord increases a tenant's rent by 8% or more over a 12 month rolling period, the notice must specify a rationale for the rent increase and specify how much relocation assistance is available. Relocation assistance may be 3 times the current fair market rent in Bellingham, or 3 times the tenant's current rent, which ever is higher. BMC 6.14.020 (<https://bellingham.municipal.codes/BMC/6.14.020>)

4. King County cities

Auburn

Auburn requires landlords to have a business license and requires rental unit inspections. AMC 5.22 (<https://auburn.municipal.codes/ACC/5.22.010>).

Move in costs: In Auburn, security deposits are capped at 1 month's rent. And only "reasonable" pet deposits are allowed. AMC 5.23.040.A.2 (<https://auburn.municipal.codes/ACC/5.23.040>).

Late fee cap: Auburn has a cap on late fees of \$10 and prohibits fees for serving a late fee notice. AMC 5.23.040.A.3 (<https://auburn.municipal.codes/ACC/5.23.040>).

Rent increase notices: In Auburn, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 5% of monthly rent. AMC 5.23.040 (<https://auburn.municipal.codes/ACC/5.23.040>).

Burien

Rental business license and inspection requirement: In Burien, landlords must get an annual residential rental business license. BMC 5.62.040(2) (<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/html/Burien05/Burien0562.html#5.62.040>)
. All rental units in Aberdeen must be inspected at least once every 3 years.
BMC 5.62.070(1)
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/html/Burien05/Burien0562.html#5.62.070>)
.

Move in costs: In Burien, "the sum of any security deposits, nonrefundable move-in fees, and/or last month's rent may not exceed one month's rent,

except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants' income. The exception for subsidized housing shall not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. BMC 5.63.040(1)
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/#!/Burien05/Burien0563.html>).

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in Burien cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number. BMC 5.63.120
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/html/Burien05/Burien0563.html#5.63.120>)

.

Late fee cap: Burien has a cap on late fees of \$10 and prohibits fees for serving a late fee notice. BMC 5.63.090
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/#!/Burien05/Burien0563.html>)

.

Rent increase notices: In Burien, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. BMC 5.63.100(1)
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/#!/Burien05/Burien0563.html>)

.

Defective conditions: In Burien, rent increases are banned if the rental unit has defective conditions making the unit uninhabitable or otherwise violates the RLTA's Landlord Duties statute, RCW 59.18.060.
(<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.060>)BMC 5.63.100(2)
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Burien/#!/Burien05/Burien0563.html>)

.

Issaquah

Rent increase notices: In Issaquah, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent. IMC 5.52.030
(<https://issaquah.municipal.codes/IMC/5.52.030>).

Kenmore

Move in costs: In Kenmore, “All move in fees and security deposits” may not exceed one month’s rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants’ income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. KMC 8.55.040(A)
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kenmore/#!/Kenmore08/Kenmore0855.html>)

.

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in Kenmore cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number. KMC 8.55.070
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kenmore/html/Kenmore08/Kenmore0855.html#8.55.070>)

.

Late fee cap: In Kenmore, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of monthly rent. KMC 8.55.050
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kenmore/#%21/Kenmore08/Kenmore0855.html>)

.

Rent increase notices: In Kenmore, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more

than 3% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. KMC 8.55.030
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kenmore/#%21/Kenmore08/Kenmore0855.html>)

.

King County (unincorporated)

Tenants in unincorporated King County have additional tenant protections
(<https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dchs/human-social-services/housing-homeless-services/homeowners-renter-resources/unincorporated-tenant-protection>).

Move in costs: In unincorporated King County, “all move in fees and security deposits” may not exceed one month’s rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants’ income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. KCC 12.25.050
(https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/code/15_Title_12.htm#_Toc141867214)

.

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in unincorporated King County cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number. KMC 12.25.140
(https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/code/15_Title_12.htm#_Toc141867214)

.

Late fee cap: In unincorporated King County, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of monthly rent. KCC 12.25.060
(https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/code/15_Title_12.htm#_Toc141867214)

.

Rent increase notices: In unincorporated King County, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent. KCC 12.25.070
(https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/code/15_Title_12.htm#_Toc141867214)

.

Defective conditions: In unincorporated King County, rent increases are banned if the rental unit has defective conditions making the unit uninhabitable or otherwise violates the RLTA's Landlord Duties statute, RCW 59.18.060. (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.060>) KCC 12.25.100
(https://aqua.kingcounty.gov/council/clerk/code/15_Title_12.htm#_Toc141867214)

.

Kirkland

Move in costs: In Kirkland, "all move in fees and security deposits" may not exceed one month's rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants' income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. KMC 7.75.040
(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kirkland/?Kirkland07/Kirkland0775.html>)

.

Rent increase notices: In Kirkland, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. KMC 7.75.030

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Kirkland/?Kirkland07/Kirkland0775.html>)

.

Redmond

Move in costs: In Redmond, “all move in fees and security deposits” may not exceed one month’s rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants’ income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. RMC 9.54.040 (<https://redmond.municipal.codes/RMC/9.54.040>).

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in Redmond cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number. RMC 9.54.065 (<https://redmond.municipal.codes/RMC/9.54.065>).

Late fee cap: In Redmond, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of monthly rent. RMC 9.54.050 (<https://redmond.municipal.codes/RMC/9.54.050>).

Rent increase notices: In Redmond, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. RMC 9.54.030 (<https://redmond.municipal.codes/RMC/9.54.030>).

SeaTac

Move in costs: In SeaTac, the “sum of any security deposits, nonrefundable move-in fees, and/or last month’s rent” may not exceed one month’s rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the

tenants' income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. SMC 4.05.050

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SeaTac/html/SeaTac04/SeaTac0405.html#4.05.050>)

.

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in SeaTac cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number if they do not have one. SMC 4.05.100

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SeaTac/html/SeaTac04/SeaTac0405.html#4.05.100>)

.

Late fee cap: In SeaTac, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of monthly rent. SMC 4.05.060

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SeaTac/html/SeaTac04/SeaTac0405.html#4.05.060>)

.

Rent increase notices: In SeaTac, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 3% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. SMC 4.05.070

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SeaTac/html/SeaTac04/SeaTac0405.html#4.05.070>)

.

Defective conditions: In SeaTac, rent increases are banned if the rental unit has defective conditions making the unit uninhabitable or otherwise violates the RLTA's Landlord Duties statute, RCW 59.18.060.

(<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.060>) SMC 4.05.070(D)

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SeaTac/#%21/SeaTac04/SeaTac0405.html>)

.

Seattle

Seattle provides information for Seattle renters

(<https://www.seattle.gov/rentinginseattle/renters>) including a Seattle Renter's Handbook

(<https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/RentingInSeattle/languages/English/Renter>) and a Renting in Seattle Help Line

(<https://www.seattle.gov/rentinginseattle/contact-us>) at 206-684-5700.

Rental housing registration and inspection requirement: In Seattle, landlords must register their rental units. SMC 22.214

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT)
. Seattle inspects many of its rental units every year.

Move in costs: In Seattle, the “total amount of a security deposits and non-refundable fee” may not exceed one month’s rent. Non-refundable fees may not exceed 10% of the first full month’s rent. SMC 7.24.035

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT7COPR_CH7.24RE)
.

Late fee cap: Seattle has a cap on late fees of \$10. SMC 7.24.034

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT7COPR_CH7.24RE)
.

Rent increase notices: In Seattle, rent increase notices must be sent at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect. SMC 22.206.180(H)

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT)
.

Defective conditions: In Seattle, rent increases are banned if the rental unit has defective conditions that violate Seattle's Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance.

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
SMC 22.206.180

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
.

Cold weather and school year eviction bans: In Seattle, moderate income households generally can't be evicted between December 1 and March 1 (SMC 22.205.080

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
) , and households with students or school staff generally can't be evicted during the Seattle Public Schools calendar year (SMC 22.205.110
(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
).

Relocation assistance: Seattle provides for relocation assistance for some displaced tenants after certain rent increases above 10% (SMC 22.212

(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
) or for when a building is torn down or substantially changed (SMC 22.210
(https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT22BUCOCO_SUBT
).

Shoreline

Shoreline provides information about Shoreline tenant protections.

(<https://www.shorelinewa.gov/services/human-services/tenant->

protections#:~:text=Protections%20adopted%20in%20December%202023%20include%3A&tex

Move in costs: In Shoreline, all “move-in fees and security deposits” may not exceed one month’s rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants’ income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.

SMC 9.35.040

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Shoreline/#!/Shoreline09/Shoreline0935.html>)

.

Social Security Numbers: Landlords in Shoreline cannot require rental applicants to provide a Social Security Number if they do not have one and cannot deny an application just on the basis that the prospective tenant didn’t provide one. SMC 9.35.060

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Shoreline/#!/Shoreline09/Shoreline0935.html>)

Late fee cap: In Shoreline, late fees cannot be more than 1.5% of monthly rent. SMC 9.35.030

(<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Shoreline/#!/Shoreline09/Shoreline0935.html>)

5. Thurston County cities

Olympia

Olympia renters have additional rights and protections

(https://www.olympiawa.gov/community/housing__homelessness/tenant_protections.php#rig

(some exceptions may apply). These protections only apply to properties in

Olympia city limits

(https://www.olympiawa.gov/Document_center/Community/Maps/City-Limits-Map-2022.pdf)

(https://www.olympiawa.gov/Document_center/Community/Maps/City-Limits-Map-2022.pdf) not in the Urban Growth Area.

Move in costs: In Olympia, security deposits may not exceed one month's rent, except in subsidized housing where the amount of rent is set based on the tenants' income. But the exception for subsidized housing does not include tenancies with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. OMC 5.82.060(A)(2) (<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Olympia/html/Olympia05/Olympia0582.html#5.82.060>)

.

Tumwater

Rent increase notices: In Tumwater, rent increase notices must be sent at least 120 days before the increase goes into effect, if the increase is more than 5% of monthly rent and at least 180 days before the increase goes into effect if the increase is more than 10% of monthly rent. TMC 5.75.070(A) (<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/Tumwater/html/Tumwater05/Tumwater0575.html#5.75>)

.

6. Pierce County cities

Lakewood

Rental housing safety program (<https://cityoflakewood.us/rental-housing-safety-program/>): All rental property owners with property in the City of Lakewood are required to register their rental property on an annual basis with the city. The properties must be inspected and are required to pass City of Lakewood rental inspection protocols. LMC 5.60 (<https://lakewood.municipal.codes/LMC/5.60>).

Tacoma

Tacoma provides information about Tacoma tenant protections (<https://cityoftacoma.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=167941>).

Late fee cap: In Tacoma, late fees cannot be more than \$10/month. TMC 1.100.040(1)(e)

(https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/LFCI%20O

.

Move in costs: In Tacoma, move-in fees are capped at one month's rent. TMC 1.100.040(1)(d)

(https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/LFCI%20O

.

Rent increase notices: In Tacoma, two notices are required to raise rent: the first 180-210 days before the increase would take effect, and the second 90-120 days before TMC 1.100.050(1)

(https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/LFCI%20O

.

Defective conditions: In Tacoma, rent increases are banned if the rental unit presents conditions that endanger or impair health and safety, or violates the RLTA's Landlord Duties statute, RCW 59.18.060

(<https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=59.18.060>), or if the landlord hasn't registered the rental unit, or if the landlord does not have a business license. TMC 1.95.060(E)

(https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/TMC20230724-advancecopy.pdf).

Cold weather and school year eviction bans: In Tacoma, households generally can't be evicted between November 1 and April 1, and households with students or school staff generally can't be evicted during the Tacoma Public Schools calendar year TMC 1.100.060

(https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/LFCI%20O

.

Relocation assistance: In Tacoma, Most tenants are entitled to relocation assistance upon request if the rent increase is at least 5%. TMC 1.100.050(4)

(https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/OEHR/RentalHousing/LFCI%20O

.

7. Spokane

Spokane provides information about rights and resources for Spokane tenants (<https://my.spokanecity.org/housing/tenants-rights-and-resources/>).

Rental housing registration and inspection requirement: In Spokane, landlords must register their rental units. SMC 10.57.020

(<https://my.spokanecity.org/smc/?Section=10.57.020>).

WashingtonLawHelp.org gives general information. It is not legal advice.
Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.