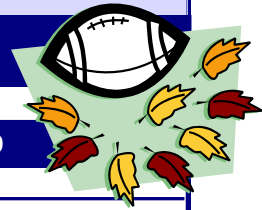


Dave Poletti & Associates Presents

The Seattle Landlord Report

A Monthly Publication to Keep Our Clients Informed



RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTIONS IN SEATTLE

September 2010

CITY COUNCIL ADOPTS RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION PROGRAM

RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTIONS IN SEATTLE – A MOVE TO PROTECT RENTERS FROM SUB-STANDARD CONDITIONS

In a recent decision, Seattle City Council approved legislation designed to protect renters from rental housing conditions that do not live up to what the city considers minimum standards. This mirrors successful passage of legislation at the State level proposed by representatives of both apartment owners and their tenants to improve the quality of rental housing in the State.

Commenting on the new legislation, Councilmember Sally J. Clark explained that "the vast majority of landlords in Seattle care about their renters and their investment, but a few don't." As chair of the Seattle City Council's Committee on the Built Environment, she was instrumental in bringing the legislation before the Full Council for a vote. She recognizes that "a rental licensing and inspection program isn't a cure-all for sub-standard housing, but we should preserve the ability to institute a program that safeguards the rights of tenants and property owners."

The Council's actions were motivated in part by legislation passed by the State Legislature. The Council had until June 10,

2010 to put its own inspection program in place or State inspection rules would have taken precedence, and Seattle's ability to design local inspection programs would have been forfeited. This means the current ordinance preserves the right of the Council to define the standards that will apply to rental properties in Seattle.

Rental property owners and managers can expect the specific details regarding rental housing licensing and inspection programs to change. The Council has until April 1, 2012 to finalize these details and put a final version of the law into effect.

What has changed?

It is estimated that around 51% of all dwellings in Seattle are rented. The previous law only allowed city inspectors to enter a rental property upon the invitation of the tenant or owner. The new legislation will allow the City to move forward with a pro-active rental inspection program.

As part of the process of developing the City's comprehensive plan, the Department of Planning & Development (DPD) must prepare a report by February 1, 2011 that addresses the elements that need to be in place for the future licensing and inspection programs. The Council expects the DPD to work with stakeholders on

establishing a law that is fair and balanced.

The issues to be discussed include:

Should the City require all units to be inspected, or will a sampling be acceptable?

What kind of inspection schedule should be established?

What is a reasonable frequency for inspections?

What standards should be set for passing or failing an inspection?

Should the scope and focus of the proposed rental housing inspection

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TESTING— TEXT TO PHONE COMING SOON

We will be testing a text info to phone system to help prospective tenants gain instant access to our for lease signs around town.

Our goal is to minimize the effort it takes to call our office after hours or pull up our website just to get a price, number of bedrooms and baths, etc. The text to phone will give all of the information needed about the apartment and direct contact information to our office for a quick showing. If this is the success that we think it will be, we will expand this effort to add this service permanently.

Keep your fingers crossed.....



(Continued from page 1)

program be citywide or geographically focused?

Should inspections be limited to buildings with a certain number of units or to certain types of units?

Should there be exemptions in the legislation? If so, should they be expanded?

The DPD has also been asked to report to the City Council by July 1, 2011 with a report on its success with applying the powers granted by SSB 6459. SSB 6459 allows the City to seek an inspection warrant when evidence surfaces that a rental property has the potential to threaten the life or safety of the tenant. This information could also have an impact on the final version of this City legislation to be finalized by April 1, 2012.

Dave Poletti & Associates has built our reputation on maintaining the highest standards in building safety and maintenance for all the properties we manage. We continue to encourage and challenge all the property management companies and landlords to maintain a high standard of habitability for all residents.

