

06/16/2025 (Date of First Reading)

07/14/2025 (Date of Public Hearing)

ORDINANCE NO. M- [Ordinance Number]

AN ORDINANCE of the City of Vancouver relating to the creation of a rental registration program; adopting a new Chapter 5.08 to the Vancouver Municipal Code; enacting new sections VMC 5.08.010, 5.08.020, 5.08.030, 5.08.040, 5.08.050, 5.08.060, 5.08.070, 5.08.080, 5.08.090, 5.08.100, 5.08.110, and 5.08.120; amending VMC 22.01.030; providing for the implementation of the rental registration program; providing for severability; and setting an effective date.

WHEREAS, Washington State law 59.18.125 RCW authorizes cities to require that landlords provide a certificate of inspection as a business license condition, and

WHEREAS, the City of Vancouver has repeatedly received feedback from community stakeholders about protecting vulnerable renters, minimizing displacement, preventing deterioration of housing stock, and supporting healthy and safe living conditions; and

WHEREAS, rental registration and inspection programs were recommended in the 2016 Affordable Housing Task Force Report, the 2019 RESIDE Vancouver Plan, and the City's 2021 Equitable Development Strategy; and

WHEREAS, the City lacks comprehensive rental housing data needed to understand housing availability, market conditions, affordability and trends; and

WHEREAS, City Council supported the creation of a community Rental Habitability Workgroup, consisting of landlords, tenants, property management companies, attorneys,

housing service providers, the Vancouver Housing Authority, and state landlord associations representatives; and

WHEREAS, the City researched other programs throughout the state to advise the Habitability Workgroup on options and ideas to consider based on Vancouver's needs and conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Habitability Workgroup developed recommendations regarding annual registration, cost recovery, periodic inspection requirements, and outreach and education.

WHEREAS, the City Council adopts and incorporates by reference Staff Report SR ____ and finds that the adoption of a Rental Registration and Inspection program set forth in this Ordinance will promote the general welfare and safety of the people of Vancouver, and will create a process to regularly collect rental housing data in the City; and

WHEREAS, with proper notice to the public, the Vancouver City Council conducted a first reading of the proposed ordinance on June 16, 2025, and a public hearing concerning the ordinance and proposed code changes on July 14, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF VANCOUVER:

Section 1. The intent of this Ordinance is to create a new chapter under Title 5 of the Vancouver Municipal Code to implement rental registration provisions pursuant to RCW 59.18.

Section 2. A new chapter is created in Title 5 VMC, to be codified as chapter 5.08 VMC, which shall be entitled "Rental Housing Registration."

Section 3. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.010, and shall read as follows:

5.08.010 Purpose.

The purpose of this chapter is to improve the quality, safety, and accountability of rental housing within Vancouver. A comprehensive database of rental properties will help ensure compliance with housing standards while providing data to support effective policy decisions. The provisions in this Chapter balance the needs of the landlord, tenant, and the City to ensure safe, healthy, and thriving rental housing within the City's municipal boundaries.

Section 4. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.020, and shall read as follows:

5.08.020 Definitions.

- A. Unless specifically defined below, words or phrases used in this chapter shall be interpreted using the meaning they have in common usage and to give this chapter its most reasonable application.
- B. "Accessory dwelling unit" or "ADU" means a second, subordinate housing unit that is accessory to a single-family residence and meets the definition and requirements of VMC 20.810 for accessory dwellings.
- C. "Declaration of compliance" means a statement submitted to the City by a rental property owner or landlord that certifies that, to the best of such person's knowledge, each rental unit complies with the requirements and standards of this Chapter and Chapter 59.18 RCW, and that there are no conditions presented in any rental unit that endanger or impair the health or safety of a tenant.
- D. "Department" means the City of Vancouver Department of Economic Prosperity & Housing.

- E. "Director" means the Director of the Department of Economic Prosperity & Housing, or the Director's designee.
- F. "Housing unit" means any structure or part of a structure that is used or may be used by one or more persons as a home, residence, dwelling, or sleeping place; including but not limited to single-family residences, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes; multi-family units, apartment units, condominium units, single-room occupancy units, and accessory-dwelling units; and any other structure having similar living accommodations.
- G. "Landlord" means a landlord as defined in RCW 59.18.030 and RCW 59.18.040 of the Residential Landlord Tenant Act of 1973 ("RLTA"), as amended, in effect at the time the rental agreement is executed or occurs.
- H. "Mobile home" means a mobile home or a manufactured home as defined in Chapter 59.20 RCW.
- I. "Owner" means an owner as defined in RCW 59.18.030 and RCW 59.18.040 of the Residential Landlord Tenant Act of 1973 ("RLTA"), as amended, in effect at the time the rental agreement is executed or occurs.
- J. "Rental registration license" means a registration issued under this Chapter 5.08 VMC.
- K. "Rental unit" means a housing unit that is or may be available for rent, or is occupied or rented by a tenant or subtenant in exchange for any form of payment.
- L. "Rental property" means a single parcel with one or more rental units made available for rent or rented by the same landlord.
- M. "Rental property complex" means contiguous parcels with rental units rented by the same landlord as a single rental property.

- N. "Shelter" means a facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, owned, operated, or managed by a nonprofit organization or governmental entity, the primary purpose of which is to provide temporary shelter for people who are homeless in general or for specific populations of people who are homeless.
- O. "Single-family residence" means a single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for a household, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, cooking, and sanitation.
- P. "Tenant" means a person or household granted temporary use of a rental unit pursuant to a rental agreement.
- Q. "Unit" means any structure or part of a structure, which is used as a home, residence or sleeping place by one or more persons, including but not limited to, single-family residences, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, multi-family dwellings, apartment buildings, condominiums, mobile homes and similar living accommodations.
- R. "Unit unavailable for rent" means a unit whose owner has filed a statement signed under penalty of perjury that such unit is not offered or available for rent as a rental unit and that prior to offering or making the unit available as a rental unit, the owner will apply for a Residential Rental License and comply with any applicable administrative regulations adopted pursuant to this chapter.

Section 5. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.030, and shall read as follows:

5.08.030 Rental registration license fee.

Owners and operators of residential rental properties must secure a business license consistent with chapter 5.04 VMC. In addition to the business license, a rental registration license and

payment of a rental registration license fee under the provisions of this chapter shall be required. Revenue from the rental registration license fee shall be used to support the administration of the rental registration program and to advance initiatives that benefit rental property owners and tenants, including efforts to increase the supply and quality of rental housing in the City of Vancouver.

- A. A rental registration license fee is hereby imposed upon and shall be collected from every person owning and operating a Rental Unit subject to registration in the City of Vancouver pursuant to VMC 5.08.050. The amount of the fee shall be thirty dollars (\$30) per rental unit per calendar year, payable in advance to the City of Vancouver by January 1st of each year. The provisions of this subsection shall be deemed an exercise of the power of the city to license for revenue.
- B. No registration fee shall be required for rental units that are, as a result of a covenant to a governmental unit, income and rent restricted to remain affordable to households earning less than sixty percent (60%) of area median income. This exemption does not apply once the affordability period in the applicable covenant expires.

Section 6. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.040, and shall read as follows:

5.08.040 Penalties.

The Director, for good cause shown, may extend the time for making and filing any application as required under this chapter and may grant such reasonable additional time within which to file such applications as he or she may deem proper; provided, that any extensions in excess of thirty (30) days shall be conditioned upon payment of interest of one and one-half percent (1.5%) for each thirty (30) days or portion thereof on the amount of the fee from the date upon which said

fee became due. If payment of any fee due under this chapter is not received by the Director by the last day of the month in which such fee becomes due, there shall be added to such fee a penalty of ten percent (10%) of the amount of the fee, but in no case shall the penalty be less than ten dollars (\$10). The Director shall notify the landlord by mail of the amount of any penalties so added or assessed and the same shall become due and shall be paid within sixteen (16) days from the date of such notice. The Director is authorized, but not obligated, to waive all or a portion of the penalties provided herein in the event that the Director determines that the late payment was the result of excusable neglect.

Section 6. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.050, and shall read as follows:

5.08.050 Scope.

The registration provisions of this chapter shall apply to all rental units, with the exception of:

- A. Owner-occupied single-family residences without an accessory dwelling unit;
- B. An owner-occupied mobile home;
- C. Housing units lawfully used as short-term rentals as defined in VMC 20.835;
- D. Units unavailable for rent;
- E. Housing accommodations in hotels, motels, inns or any facility such as a condominium, resort, or other facility or place offering lodging units to guests for periods of less than thirty (30) days; provided, that if any guest resides for a period of thirty (30) days or more, then such facility shall be subject to this chapter;
- F. Housing units in any state licensed hospital, hospice, community-care facility, supported living, intermediate care facility, extended medical care facility, assisted living facility or nursing home;

- G. Housing accommodations in any convent, monastery or other facility occupied exclusively by members of a religious order;
- H. Shelter facilities with overnight sleeping accommodations, owned, operated, or managed by a nonprofit agency or governmental entity to provide temporary shelter for persons experiencing homelessness.

Section 7. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.060, and shall read as follows:

5.08.060 Residential Rental Registration License Requirement.

- A. Beginning January 1, 2026, no person shall make available for rent, rent, lease, or let, to the public any residential housing unit without registering and maintaining registration of the rental property at which the unit is located; provided, however, that a person that acquires, constructs, or begins to operate a rental unit during the year shall have until January 1 of the year following commencement of rental operations to register the unit and become subject to the registration requirement.
- B. Every rental unit owner shall obtain an annual residential rental registration license, pursuant to Chapter 5.08 VMC.
- C. The registration shall identify all rental housing units on the property and shall be the only registration required for the rental housing units on the property. For condominiums and cooperatives, the property required to be registered shall be the individual housing unit being rented, and common areas accessible to the tenant of the housing unit, and not the entire condominium building, cooperative building, or development. If a property owner owns more than one housing unit in a condominium or cooperative building, the owner may submit a single registration application for the units owned in the building.

- D. A rental registration license is valid for the calendar year in which it was issued and expires on December 31st.
- E. The residential rental housing registration for a rental unit is transferable to any person who acquires ownership of a registered rental unit for the unexpired portion of the one-year term for which it was issued.
- F. Rental unit owners must file a written application annually with the Department for each rental property to be leased. To be considered for approval, residential rental registration applications must be complete and include:
 - 1. Completed and signed Rental Registration Application provided by the City, including a declaration that all units registered are fit for human habitation in compliance with RCW 59.18.060.
 - 2. Appropriate rental registration license fee as set forth in VMC 5.08.030.
- G. An application for a rental housing registration shall be made to the Department on forms provided by the Department. The application shall include, but is not limited to:
 - 1. The name, address, and age of the property;
 - 2. The name, address, and telephone number of the property owners;
 - 3. The name, address, and telephone number of the registration applicant if different from the property owners;
 - 4. The name, address, and telephone number of the person or entity the tenant is to contact when requesting repairs be made to their rental housing unit, and the contact person's business relationship to the owner;
 - 5. A list of all rental housing units on the property, identified by a means unique to each unit, that are being rented or are available for rent ;

6. A declaration of compliance from the owner or owner's agent, declaring that all housing units that are being rented or are available for rent, are listed in the registration application and meet, or will meet, the standards under RCW 59.18.060 before the units are rented.
- H. The rental housing registration shall be issued to the property owner identified on the registration application filed with the Department.
- I. Renewal. A landlord shall renew a rental registration license for the next calendar year on or before January 1st by submitting a renewal application on a form provided by the City, updating any information as necessary, and paying the annual registration fee. Any person who fails to submit the required documentation and pay the renewal registration fee by February 15 (unless exempt) shall be subject to late fee penalties and interest pursuant to VMC 5.08.040.
- J. Transfer of Ownership. The new owner of a registered property shall, within 60 days after the sale is closed on a registered property, provide the City with updated registration information required by VMC 5.08.060(G)(2-4) and provide notice of the updated registration received from the Department according to VMC 5.08.060(L). When property is held in common with multiple owners, the registration shall be updated when more than fifty percent (50%) of the ownership changes.
- K. Display of Registration. Within thirty (30) days after the Department issues a rental registration, a copy of the current registration shall be delivered by the property owner or owner's agent to the tenants in each rental housing unit or shall be posted by the property owner or owner's agent and remain posted in one or more places readily visible to all tenants.

A copy of the current registration shall be provided by the property owner or owner's agent to all new tenants at or before the time they take possession of the rental housing unit.

- L. Registration Information. The department will maintain information regarding rental properties that have valid registration and will make such information available to the public.

Section 8. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.070, and shall read as follows:

5.08.070 Provision and posting of tenants' rights and program information.

The landlord or their authorized representative must provide to each new tenant, at the time the lease or rental agreement is signed, or the tenancy otherwise commences, written information regarding rental registration as well as tenant rights and resources. The Department is authorized to publish the written information to be provided to the tenant under this subsection and shall make such information available to owners for this purpose. The Department will also provide and advertise a website for owners, property managers and tenants regarding rental resources, laws and rights and responsibilities. The Department is further authorized to create outreach and instructional classes for owners, property managers and tenants regarding the requirements of this program.

Section 9. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.080, and shall read as follows:

5.08.080 Authority and administration.

- A. The Director shall be responsible for enforcement and administration of this ordinance.
- B. The Director is authorized to adopt, publish and enforce rules, regulations and forms consistent with this chapter for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this chapter, and it is unlawful to violate or fail to comply with any such rule or regulation.

- C. The provisions of this chapter shall be interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 59.18 RCW.
- D. The Director shall conduct an annual review of the Residential Rental Registration Program and shall submit an annual report of the program's effectiveness to the City Council.

Section 10. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.090, and shall read as follows:

5.08.090 Registration denial, suspension, or revocation.

- A. In addition to the code enforcement penalties provided for by Title 22 VMC, the registration of any rental property may be denied, suspended or revoked by the Director based on one or more of the following grounds:
 - 1. The registration was procured by fraud or false representation of fact;
 - 2. The application submitted was incomplete; or
 - 3. The declaration of compliance submitted was known, or should have been known, to be false;
 - 4. The applicant or registration holder has failed to comply with any of the provisions of this chapter;
 - 5. The applicant or registration holder is in default in any fee due to the city under this chapter;
 - 6. The continued operation of any rental housing unit at the rental property will result in danger to public health, safety, or welfare by reason of any of the following:
 - a) The city is provided notice of a violation of the building code, the fire code, or violations of any other applicable city code or state law which endangers or impairs the health or safety of the tenant.

- b) The applicant or registration holder has been convicted of a crime which bears a direct relationship to the operation of a residential housing unit under the residential rental registration issued pursuant to this chapter.
- B. If the registration of any rental property is denied, or the registration license is suspended or revoked, the Department shall notify the owner in writing by mailing the denial or revocation notice by first-class mail to all owner and agent addresses identified in the registration application. The notice will state the reason for denial, suspension or revocation, that enforcement action is contemplated, and that such person shall have a specified period of time in which to correct the violation.
- C. The rental property will be granted registration only after:
 - 1. Any and all deficiencies on which the suspension, revocation, or denial were based have been corrected;
 - 2. The applicant pays the appropriate registration fee under VMC 5.08.030 and any late fees per VMC 5.08.040.

Section 11. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.100, and shall read as follows:

5.08.100 Appeals.

- A. The owner may appeal the denial, suspension, revocation, or other decision of the Director pursuant to the appeal procedures set forth in VMC 5.01.140, provided that the “Director” for purposes of such appeals shall be the Director of Economic Prosperity and Housing.
- B. An owner’s failure to strictly comply with the procedures of VMC 5.01.140, as modified by this section, shall constitute a waiver of any challenge, administrative or judicial, of any determination, decision, or interpretation by the Director under this chapter.

Section 12. A new section is enacted and added to chapter 5.08 VMC, to be codified at VMC 5.08.110, and shall read as follows:

5.08.110 Immunity, No Warranty by City, and No Private Right of Action

- A. The purpose of this chapter is to promote the safety and welfare of the general public and not to create or designate any particular class of persons who will or should be specially protected by its terms. Nothing contained in this chapter is intended nor shall be construed to create any liability on the part of the city or its employees for any injury or damage resulting from the failure of an owner, landlord, inspector, or other individual to comply with the provisions of this chapter, or by reason or in consequence of any act or omission in connection with the implementation or enforcement of this chapter on the part of the city or its employees.
- B. By enacting and undertaking to enforce this program, the City, City Council, its agents and employees do not warrant or guarantee the safety, fitness or suitability of any dwelling in the City or any unit under this program. Owners and occupants should take whatever steps they deem appropriate to protect their interests, health, safety and welfare. Nothing contained in this chapter is intended to create a private right of action.
- C. Nothing in this ordinance shall limit the City's ability to inspect properties and issue citations for property-related conditions that may constitute an immediate health or safety threat.

Section 14 . Chapter 22.01.030 VMC (as last amended by Ord. M-4092 § 3 in 2014) shall be amended to read as follows:

The enforcement provisions of Title [22](#) shall apply to the following substantive VMC chapters and titles:

[VMC chapter 5.08, Rental Housing Registration](#)

VMC chapter [5.20](#), Display of Paraphernalia

VMC chapter [5.62](#), Commercial recycling;

VMC chapter [5.76](#), Taxi Code.

VMC chapter [5.85](#), Ambulances

VMC chapter [6.12](#), Garbage disposal;

VMC chapter [8.20](#), Nuisances;

VMC chapter [8.52](#), False Alarms, for the purposes of criminalizing the violation under 22.02.020
and for purposes of the appeal procedures under VMC chapter [22.03](#) only;

VMC chapter [11.20](#), Newsracks;

VMC chapter [11.30](#), Street frontage maintenance;

VMC chapter [11.40](#), Traffic control code;

VMC chapter [11.50](#), Utilities in the right of way;

VMC chapter [11.60](#), Street Use Permits;

VMC chapter [11.80](#), Street standards;

VMC chapter [11.90](#), Construction in the right-of-way;

VMC chapter [12.04](#), Street trees;

VMC chapter [14.04](#), Water and Sewer Use – Regulations and Charges;

VMC chapter [14.08](#), Connection to Public Sewers;

VMC chapter [14.09](#), Stormwater Management – Regulations and Charges;

VMC chapter [14.24](#), Erosion control;

VMC chapter [14.25](#), Stormwater control;

VMC chapter [14.26](#); Water resources protection;

VMC chapter [16.04](#), Firecode;

VMC chapter [16.20](#), Fireworks;

VMC chapter [16.30](#), Consumer fireworks;

All chapters in Title [17](#) of the VMC, but not including VMC chapter [17.39](#). Title [22](#) shall not limit any corrective actions or remedies contained in Title [17](#) of the VMC;

VMC Title [20](#), Development code, except that Title [22](#) shall not apply to the damages calculations under VMC chapter [20.770](#), Tree Conservation, but shall apply to 20.770 for the purposes of enforcement procedures under VMC chapter [22.02](#) and the appeal procedures under VMC chapter [22.03](#).

Section 15. Rental Registration License Fee Waiver. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Ordinance, Rental properties registered within 90 days of the date the City's online registration system becomes publicly available shall be exempt from paying the rental registration fees imposed by VMC 5.08.040 for 2026. This temporary fee waiver is intended to encourage early compliance and support the implementation of the rental registration program.

Section 16. Director Authority During Implementation Period. Until December 31, 2026, the Director shall have the authority to administratively extend the January 1, 2026 deadline for rental registration to allow for program implementation as well as the authority to waive, in whole or in part, penalties and interest associated with late registration. The Director may establish general criteria or administrative guidelines under which such waivers may be granted, including but not limited to delayed awareness of program requirements, technical challenges, or other good cause. Waivers issued under this section shall not require individualized findings unless otherwise determined necessary by the Director.

Section 17. Severability. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, section, or part of this ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances shall be adjudged by any

court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such order or judgment shall be confined in its operation to the controversy in which it was rendered and shall not affect or invalidate the remainder of any parts thereof to any other person or circumstances and to this end the provisions of each clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this law are hereby declared to be severable.

Section 18. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective on January 1, 2026.

DATE OF FINAL PASSAGE at a Regular Meeting of the Vancouver City Council:

_____.

SIGNED this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor

Attest:

Natasha Ramras, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Nena Cook, City Attorney

SUMMARY

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE of the City of Vancouver relating to the creation of a rental registration program; adopting a new Chapter 5.08 to the Vancouver Municipal Code; enacting new sections VMC 5.08.010, 5.08.020, 5.08.030, 5.08.040, 5.08.050, 5.08.060, 5.08.070, 5.08.080, 5.08.090, 5.08.100, 5.08.110, and 5.08.120; amending VMC 22.01.030; providing for the implementation of the rental registration program; providing for severability; and setting an effective date.

The full text of this ordinance will be mailed upon request. Contact public records staff at (360) 487-8480, citypdr@cityofvancouver.us, or via [Public Records Request -The City of Vancouver, WA](#).