

Renter Town Hall Recap
July 11th, 2026
Beacon Hill Library

Event Hosts:

The Renter Town Hall was jointly hosted by Seattle Ban RUBS, The Seattle Renters' Commission, Your City, and the Stay Housed Stay Healthy Coalition.

Event Purpose:

The Town Hall was broken into four key elements

- Community engagement + renter resources
- Identify major issues for renters in Seattle
- Breakout groups to discuss renter issues + possible solutions
- Practice renter storytelling + public comment

Event Info:

Event hosts put up flyers(in English and Spanish) and sent out email and social media invites in the weeks leading up to the event. Food & Drink from Carnitas Michoacan were provided for free to attendees thanks to support from the Seattle Renters' Commission. Mandarin and Spanish interpreters were also available free of charge to attendees. 30 individuals attended the town hall in addition to 8 volunteers.

After a brief introduction of the event and the event hosts, attendees self-selected into five breakout groups to discuss topics related to their experiences as renters. Below are summaries of each group's discussion.

RATIO UTILITY BILLING (RUBS):

- Renters are required to pay for heat they don't use, even in the winter.
- RUBS make rent per month unpredictable, especially during seasonal weather conditions.
- RUBS pushes low-income renters out of the private housing market.
- Tenants expressed confusion and limited information supplied (if any at all). Further requests for clarification from Landlords are ignored, insufficient, or incorrect.
- RUBS causes serious instability amongst low-income section 8 residents, since their vouchers cannot be used towards utilities and it is an unpredictable amount, causing great insecurity about their ability to keep their current housing, or to gauge the affordability of another apartment.

JUNK FEES:

- Pet rent should be banned! Possible alternative is to require a one-time pet deposit, instead of increasing rent monthly.
- Digital pay laundry machines charge a processing fee but landlords aren't required to accept quarters.

- Paying for “valet” trash that is inconsistently picked up by building staff. Renters would rather take their trash to the dumpster but then they’d pay for a service they don’t even use.
- Pest control; maintenance requests; and fob key replacements are junk fee examples.
- Junk fees increase the likelihood of unpredictable housing change, causing housing instability for renters.
- There isn’t enough public housing to compensate for low-income renters who are priced out of the private housing market. That’s gentrification.
- SDCI is the city portal for renters to submit complaints but enforcement is inconsistent. Landlords retaliate as a consequence, which intimidates neighbors to submit complaints as well.
- One renter said they had a pipe burst and the landlord charged them for the lost water. Completely unfair and out of the renter’s control!

EVICCTIONS:

- The eviction process is difficult to navigate, asymmetrical, and stacked against the tenant.
 - If you’re late to a hearing, you’ll get a default judgement. The landlord isn’t even required to show up.
- The Cost of laundry is getting too high for tenants to afford in MFTE/nonprofit-owned housing.
- For renters: Exhausting run-around from unresponsive government which prevents success in navigating the eviction process.
- There should be rights to rent refusal. Getting priced and pushed out of your home is gentrification.
- Lack of financial resources for low-income renters to defend themselves in court, meanwhile, landlords pay top dollar for lawyers.
 - Resources in general are inaccessible, especially with unresponsive nonprofits and government agencies.
- If you don’t move your belongings before the landlord locks the unit, they become inaccessible, including essential documents.
- Lack of accountability to nonprofits that serve low-income renters, especially with hostile property managers.
- Eviction permanently affects record, which disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.
 - There needs to be clear pathways to remove an eviction from your record, otherwise you’re stuck homeless without options.
- Bring back dispute resolutions.

MAINTENANCE:

- Landlords do not follow legal timelines for regular repairs, and there is no real enforcement of timelines.
- Hostile property managers do not authorize renter access to communal spaces.

- Property managers don't get rid of cockroaches and other pests, which makes it a "slum lord" environment.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Without enforcement and penalties, all good laws mean nothing.
- Require landlords to provide a rent receipt every month to all renters.
- Seattle Housing Authority board members have periodic, possibly quarterly, public comment. They are also inconsistent in keeping landlords accountable to tenant complaints.
- Banning RUBS and other junk fees would make the housing market more affordable for renters, especially as landlords adjust to market changes.
- Seattle does not have enough vacancies to support a healthy housing market.
- Affordable housing does not adequately support those in need in Seattle on its own.
- Council meetings during the middle of the workday make them inaccessible to those who want to participate in the legislative process.

Following the breakout groups, attendees shared their experiences outloud to the whole group to practice public storytelling, similar to public comment.

Event Reflections:

Attendees and volunteers noted the success of a community event like this where renters can discuss a variety of issues they experience and be in community together to brainstorm how they might address their issue. Many attendees (and people who were unable to attend) asked when the next event would be held. Event hosts also noted the value of co-planning and hosting an event like this to utilize our various resources, capacities and contacts. All hosts are open to co-hosting future town halls like this, perhaps in another area of the City.