



Rental Fee Regulation Ordinance

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Helping people build a safe, livable, and inclusive Seattle.

Why This Ordinance Passed

- Over 50% of Seattleites rent. Average Seattle rents rose 32% from 2012–2022 — from \$1,430 to \$1,897 a month
- 38,365 renter households are cost-burdened; another 33,795 are severely cost-burdened
- 89% of renters pay at least one fee on top of rent (National Consumer Law Center, 2023)
- Undisclosed fees add 10–30% to total monthly cost — \$203–\$609/month on Seattle's average rent
- Renters often learn about fees only at lease signing, after paying nonrefundable application and move-in costs
- SDCI now has additional enforcement tools over SMC chapter 7.24

What the Rental Fee Regulation Does

- Requires landlords to disclose the full cost of renting — rent, fees, and utilities — before a lease is signed
- Prohibits or limits specific fees the City has identified as unfair or excessive
- Adds new recordkeeping obligations, with a 3-year retention requirement
- Expands SDCI's investigation authority, including building-wide and company-wide investigations
- Creates new enforcement mechanisms, civil penalties, and tenant remedies
- Amends SMC 7.24.020, .050, .060, .120, .130; adds new Sections 7.24.039–.045 and .170–.240
- Applies to all rental agreements and renewals entered into after July 1, 2027

Fee Disclosure Requirements

- Ads, listings, and applications must disclose: rent, discounts/concessions, tenant-paid utilities, utilities included in rent, all mandatory and optional fees, and total monthly cost
- The same disclosure must appear on a form no longer than two pages, before the first page of the lease
- An updated disclosure is required every 12 months, and whenever a non-variable fee changes
- Variable fees are disclosed as a 12-month rolling average, with a monthly statement to the tenant
- A landlord may not charge any fee for preparing or delivering a required disclosure form
- SDCI will publish a model disclosure form, translated into Seattle's five most common languages available in the first quarter of 2027

Permitted vs. Prohibited Fees

Fees Landlords May Still Charge

- Late fees, security deposits & nonrefundable move-in fees

Late fee max is \$10

Security deposit can equal a maximum of 1 month's rent or 90% of 1 month's rent plus 10% move-in fees (chargeable only for cleaning or screening)

- Pet damage deposits – max 25% of 1 month's rent
- Utility fees (Chapter 7.25)
- Lost-key (lesser of cost or \$50)
- Lockout (\$50 M-F 8AM-6PM - \$150 outside business hours)
- Returned-payment fees (lesser of cost or \$31)
- Tenant caused damage reimbursement
- Air conditioning unit rental fee
- Disclosed optional services (renter must opt in in writing and must be able to opt out without penalty)

Permitted vs. Prohibited Fees

Fees That Are Now Prohibited

- In-unit appliance/feature fees (except approved cooling units)
- Common-area access fees (except temporary exclusive-use rentals)
- Fees to pay by check, money order, cashier's check, or ACH
- Mail, package, or mailbox-access fees;
- Fees for required landlord duties
- Pet-keeping fees/rent beyond the deposit;
- Undisclosed landlord insurance fees
- Administration fees
- Tenant change fees
- Month to month fees
- Deposit return fees

If it's not on the allowed fees list – don't charge it!

Recordkeeping & Investigations

- Landlords must retain ads, applications, leases/renewals, disclosure forms, fee records, and vendor receipts for 3 years
- Failure to retain required records creates a rebuttable presumption that a violation occurred
- SDCI may open individual, building-wide, or company-wide investigations
- The Hearing Examiner may issue subpoenas compelling records or testimony
- Investigations must commence within 3 years of the alleged violation
- SDCI may refer matters to the City Attorney's Office for civil action at any stage

Enforcement & Civil Penalties

Violation	Penalty
First citation violation	\$750
Subsequent violation (within 5 years)	\$1,500
Retaliation against a tenant	\$5,000
Obstructing an SDCI or Hearing Examiner investigation	\$5,000
Unlawful lease provision (private right of action)	Up to \$4,000 + attorney fees
Prohibited fee charged to a tenant	2× fee + 12%/yr interest

Penalties adjust annually for CPI-U (housing component) starting January 1, 2028.

Remedies Available to Tenants

- Full reimbursement of any prohibited fee, plus double damages
- Interest accrues at 12% per year from the date the fee was charged
- Prohibited fees offset rent owed in an unlawful-detainer action
- Tenants may terminate the lease without penalty for certain disclosure failures
- Tenants may pursue relief on behalf of other similarly situated renters
- Prevailing tenants recover reasonable attorney fees and costs
- The City Attorney's Office may also sue and recover treble damages on the City's behalf

Key Dates

- July 1, 2026 — Mayor Wilson transmits legislation to Council
- July 22 – August 3, 2026 — Committee review and amendment (Housing, Arts, and Civil Rights)
- August 11, 2026 — Passed by City Council, 8–0
- August 18, 2026 — Signed by Mayor Wilson; becomes Ordinance 127497
- July 1, 2027 — Substantive provisions take effect for new agreements and renewals entered into after this date
- January 1, 2028 — Civil penalty and liability amounts begin annual CPI-U adjustment

Questions?

Seattle Dept. of Construction & Inspections

Renting in Seattle Helpline (206) 684-5700

seattle.gov/rentinginseattle

sdci.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new

