Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

Housing, Arts, and Civil Rights Committee
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SDCI Rental Programs Overview

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

What to Expect

- SDCI Renter Programs
  - Who We Are
  - What We Do
- Our Codes
- Intersection with State Landlord-Tenant Laws
- Outreach – Renting in Seattle
- Community Partnerships & Grants
- Intersection with other City Departments
- How Customers Reach Us
- Our Numbers – 2025
- 2026 Priorities

Who We Are & What We Do

- Property Owner and Tenant Assistance (POTA) - (11 FTE – mostly General Fund)
  - Investigate complaints and enforce City rental housing regulations
  - Administer tenant relocation benefits
- Rental Housing Standards (About 4 FTE – General Fund)
  - Investigate and enforce City maintenance, habitability, and safety standards for rental housing
- Rental Registration and Inspection (RRIO) – (13 FTE – fee supported)
  - Ensure minimum safety standards are met for rental housing
- Outreach & Education
  - Respond to questions from owners and renters about rights and duties
  - Host landlord trainings
  - Maintain web and print materials in compliance with accessibility standards
- Tenant Services Grants – $2.5M in grants
  - Partner with CBOs to connect with hard-to-reach communities & provide essential services for housing stability
- Subject Matter Expertise
  - Serve as resource for City government and other jurisdictions on landlord-tenant law, front-line perspective, and research

Our Codes – Maintenance, Habitability, & Safety

Housing and Building Maintenance Code (HMBC)

Rental housing minimum standards, including:

- Maintenance
- Structural integrity
- Heat
- Ventilation
- Electrical
- Fire safety and security

Complaint-based response

Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) –

- Applies to most rental housing in the City
- Based on HBMC
- Registration must be renewed every 2 years
- Properties are selected at random for inspection every 5-10 years
- RRIO includes non-owner-occupied short-term rentals

Our Codes – Tenant Protections

Rental Agreements & Fees

- Move-In Costs
- Late & Notice Fees
- Non-Electronic Payments
- Notice of Rent Increases
- Roommates
- Security Deposits

Prohibited Acts

- Retaliation
- Rent increases when property fails RRIO inspection
- Lockouts
- Impeding tenant right to organize
- Illegal entry

Duties of Owners

- Keys/access
- Maintain clean & habitable premises
- Provide for pest extermination
- Make all repairs as required by the Code

Our Codes – Evictions

Eviction Protections

- Right to Counsel
- Just Cause Eviction Ordinance
- Right of First Refusal/Lease Renewal

Eviction Defenses

- RRIO Registration
- School Year Defense
- Winter Eviction Defense

Our Codes – Relocation Assistance

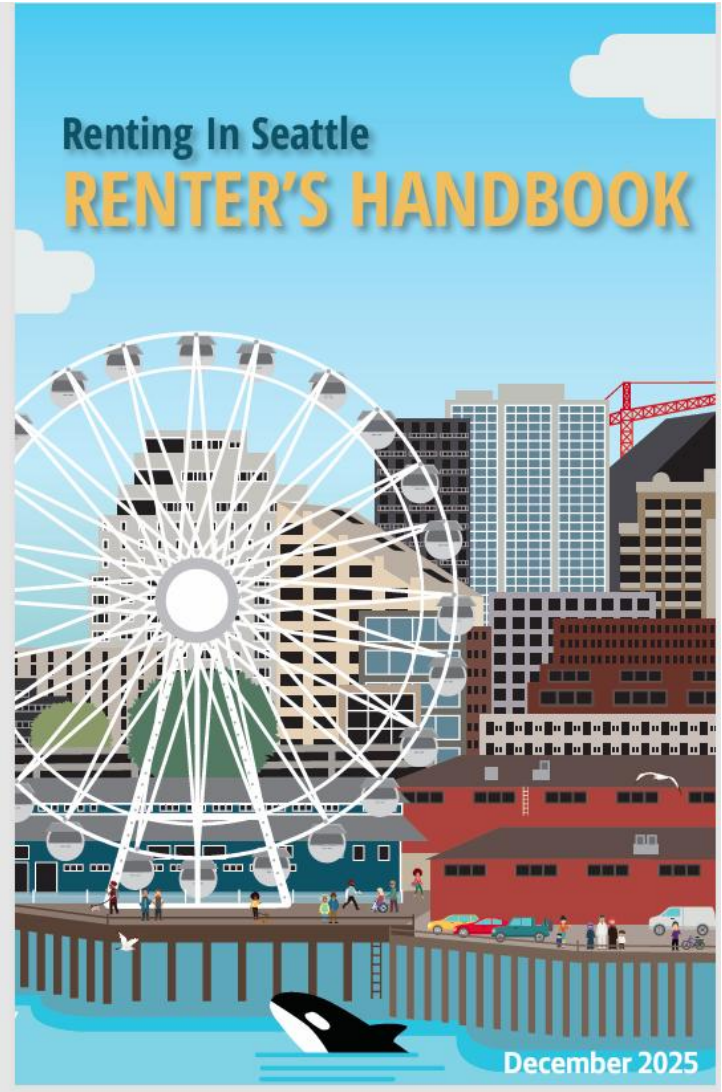
Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO)	• Development, change of use, removal of rent restrictions • Provides early notice to all and $5,354 to 50% AMI or less
Economic Displacement Relocation Assistance Ordinance (EDRA)	• Rent increase of 10% or more • Provides up to 3x rent to 80% AMI or less
Emergency and Other Relocation Assistance	• Imminently hazardous housing conditions, unpermitted units • Financial assistance (varies) for situations within the owner's control or caused by owner neglect

Intersection with State Landlord-Tenant Laws

- **Rent Stabilization** – SDCI educates renters and owners on limitations in rent increases and form requirements.
- **Notices to Terminate for Cause & Lease Renewals** – SDCI refers owners to the State's requirements for language, content, and service.
- **Timeline for Repairs** – SDCI provides renters and owners with the applicable timelines for repair and alternate remedies based on the individualized situation.
- **Security Deposits** – SDCI offers guidance and self-help materials for renters seeking return of their deposits.

Outreach - Renting in Seattle

- **“Renting in Seattle”** branded to be easy to find and navigate City services for renters
- **Website** written for both renter and landlord audience – www.seattle.gov/rentinginseattle
- **Landlord Trainings** – at least four planned for 2026
- **Renter’s Handbook** – in 14 languages, partner with Rental Housing Association on distribution
- **Landlord newsletter** – sent approx. quarterly to ~19,000 email addresses
- **Partner Trainings** – community organizations, landlord organizations, etc.
- **Community events** – SDCI home fairs, SHA housing fairs, food banks, etc.



Community Partners & Grants

- SDCI looks to Community partners for:
  - Eviction & legal defense
  - Culturally relevant outreach and education
  - Supportive services - casework, dispute resolution
  - Access to hard-to-reach communities
- SDCI provides training, support, and coordination
- Annual grant solicitation (~$2.5M in 2026 and the 2027-2028 baseline)

ORGANIZATION	GRANT AMOUNT
BE:SEATTLE	$122,000
DISPUTE RESOLUTION	$143,872
HOUSING JUSTICE PROJECT	$900,000
INTERIM CDA	$86,250
QLAW	$150,000
QUEER POWER ALLIANCE	$72,143
SOLID GROUND	$145,045
TENANT LAW CTR	$435,000
TENANTS UNION	$83,000
UNITED INDIANS	$52,705
VILLA COMUNITARIA	$271,131

Intersection with Other City Departments

Seattle Office for Civil Rights – Housing discrimination laws, including Fair Chance Housing and First in Time, testing program, mediation, outreach

Department of Neighborhoods – Renters' Commission staffing

Human Services Department - Rent assistance through community organizations

Office of Housing – Rent and income restricted affordable housing development, housing weatherization

City Utilities – Utility accounts and payment, shutoffs, and the Utility Discount Program

Community-based organizations – Eviction defense, outreach & education, casework, rent and other direct assistance, renter and landlord advocacy

How Customers Reach Us

Customer submits a complaint through the Seattle Services Portal or calls Renting in Seattle – 206-684-5700

Intake team handles basic questions, **immediate referrals**, & **routing**

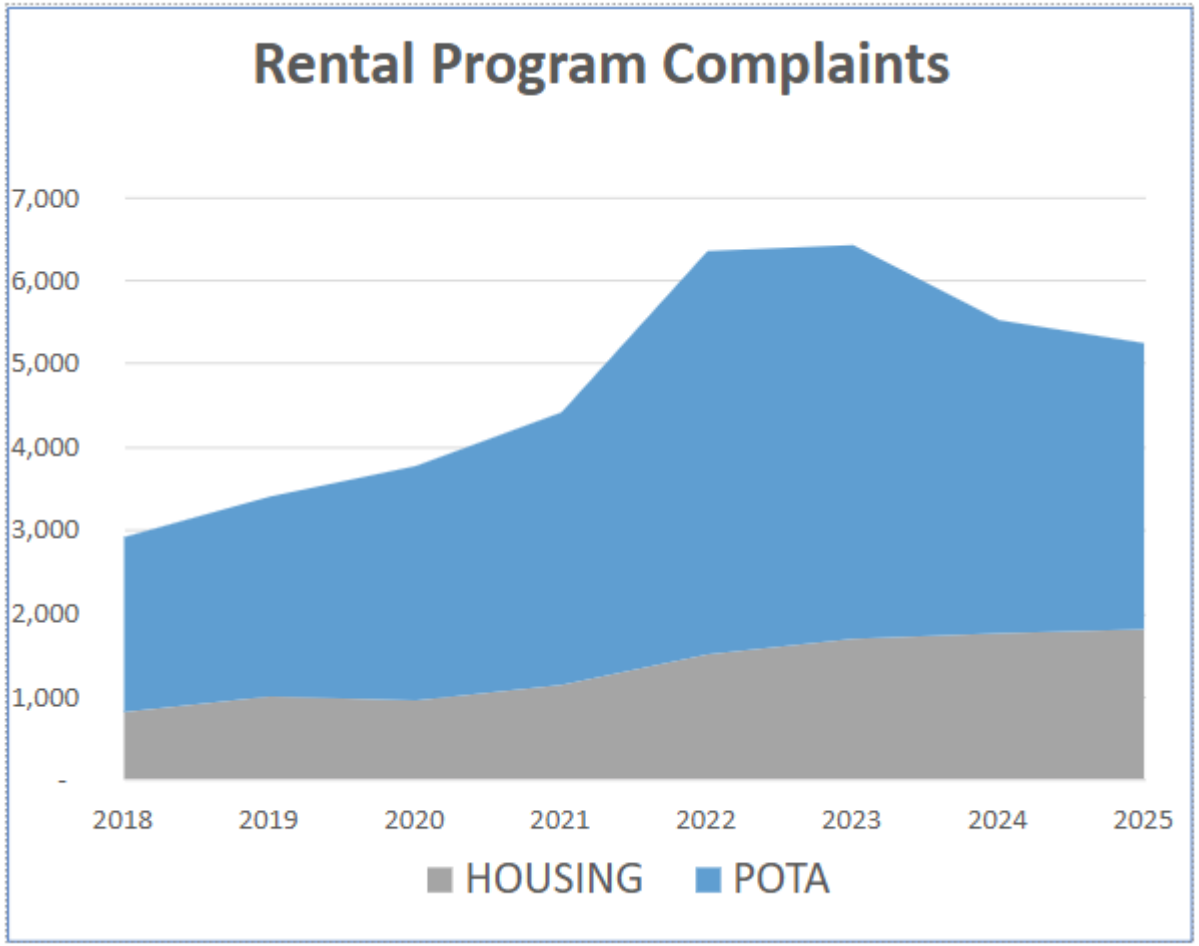
Complaints are triaged based on priority level (1st priority to emergency conditions, lock outs, evictions & rent increases)

Specialist or Inspector contacts customer for follow up investigation

SDCI - Our Numbers

Work stabilizing after the pandemic peak?

- About 70% increase over pre-pandemic
- Rental complaints made 5,284 (2025)
- Rental complaints addressed 5,290 (2025)
- Analysis of triage system: 1-day median staff response time, 28-day average response time. (POTA complaints that came in 2024 through April 2025)
- Enforcement cases – 289
- Most complaints are resolved through coaching and voluntary compliance



2025 Outputs by Program

TRAO

- 86 Households
- $2630 avg./household

EDRA

- 75 Households
- $4738 avg./household

RRIO

- 28,452 Registered Properties
- 195,455 Units
- 3,608 property inspections

Outreach

- 22 hosted or staffed events
- Over 800 owners & property managers trained

Grants

- 9,244 direct tenant contacts
- 147,000 digital outreach contacts

2026 Priorities

- Adapt to the “new normal” for workload
- Improve Customer Experience
  - Update customer intake systems
    - EDRA intake & IT system (already underway)
  - Expand collaboration with community partners to meet unmet needs
  - Complete accessibility work for all public facing materials
- Improve RRIO IT system
- Provide subject-matter expertise and support to policy makers

Contact Information

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