

June 17, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Planning, Land Use and Zoning Committee
From: Aly Pennucci, Central Staff
Subject: Council Bill 119546 – Rental Registration and Inspections Ordinance

On June 19, the Planning, Land Use and Zoning (PLUZ) Committee will discuss and may vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 119546](#). This bill would make a small change to the Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance (RRIO) to match provisions in State law¹ by providing an additional option for property owners when they are complying with the required inspection of their rental property. This memo provides a brief background on the RRIO program and describes CB 119546.

Background

RRIO helps ensure that all rental housing in Seattle is safe and meets basic housing maintenance requirements by requiring that rental properties register with the City and have periodic inspections. The City adopted RRIO in 2012 and the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) began registering properties in 2014 and the first inspections in 2015. All registered rental properties must be inspected at least once every ten years. The owner must hire a “qualified rental housing inspector” to conduct the inspection – this can be a City inspector, or they can hire a private inspector.

For multifamily buildings, only a sampling of the units in the building are required to be inspected. If one of the units selected for inspection fails the inspection, SDCI may require that up to 100 percent of the units in the building be inspected.² Prior to 2017, if a property owner chose to hire a private inspector to conduct the RRIO inspection, the City only received the Certificate of Compliance issued by the private inspector and did not receive any information about aspects of the RRIO requirements the unit may have failed. (If the unit does not pass the inspection, the property owner must correct the safety or maintenance issues and pass a re-inspection). Without the notice of any failures, SDCI cannot use its discretionary authority to address more extensive maintenance or safety issues by requiring inspection of additional units.

In 2017 the Council adopted changes to RRIO that added a requirement that, if any failure is found by a private inspector, both the results of the initial inspection and the Certificate of Compliance must be submitted to SDCI. With that information SDCI can determine if

¹ [RCW 59.18.125](#)

² Certain RRIO failures identified in the initial inspection of a sample of units may indicate broader safety or maintenance issues in the building. SDCI has discretion to determine when additional units should be inspected to determine if there are broader issues throughout the building that need to be addressed.

inspection of additional units is needed. However, if a property owner prefers not to share that information with the City, under the existing code, there is not an alternative option.

CB 119546

This legislation would amend the RRIO program to provide an option for property owners who do not want to provide the results of the initial inspection to SDCI. Property owners who select this option would only be required to submit a Certificate of Compliance and no additional information if they have 100 percent of the rental units inspected. This will allow the private inspector to identify broader housing safety or maintenance violations and ensure that those issues are corrected prior to issuing a Certificate of Compliance.

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Director