

Tenants' Bill Of Rights

(From 2/11/2016 blog post by Ted Wheeler on www.tedwheeler.com, accessed 4/2/2017)

The Right to Rent, because a home creates a foundation for health, family, and economic success; because there are currently too many barriers to finding a home;

The Right to Recourse, because renters should know their rights; because both landlords and tenants must be accountable to the law;

The Right to Remain, because housing stability has positive impacts on families, communities, health, education, and the economy; because housing stability helps ensure children show up to school ready to learn; because evictions disrupt lives, jobs, and can contribute to homelessness.

To ensure these rights are upheld, the following policies are proposed:

Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs: Create the Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs within the Portland Housing Bureau to mediate disputes between tenants and landlords. The office would inform landlords and renters of their rights and responsibilities, including a clear and consistent set of standards for landlords. The office would be funded by shifting existing resources within the Housing Bureau, or through fees paid by the industry the office regulates.

Just Cause Evictions: Establish a set of Just Cause Eviction Criteria, similar to the City of Seattle, which details 18 such criteria. Relocation payments will be required for certain Just Cause evictions and any No Cause evictions, should they still be allowed.

Funding for Affordable Housing: Increased demolitions in Portland lead to increased property tax revenues from the new homes built, because the new homes will be assessed at current market levels. The city should consider capturing the additional property tax revenues for these properties, and dedicating the revenues to affordable housing.

Reduce Roadblocks to Building Affordable Housing: Immediately reduce or waive fees for affordable housing, cut red tape, and streamline the process. Affordable housing developers should have a single point of contact at the city to help navigate the process. Closely evaluate the effects of design review upon affordable housing development, and create a standard set of approved materials and styles for affordable housing to reduce the time in design review.

PDX Rent: Encourage the creation of an online database for landlords and prospective renters that includes a standardized rental application and background check. Portland entrepreneurs are already lending their talents to affordable housing and tenants' issues. Tyrone Poole recently won the 1776 Challenge Cup Regional in San Francisco for his site NoAppFee.com, which utilizes data and technology to promote equal access to housing. The city should be capitalizing on these innovations.

Inspections: Work to implement the Bureau of Development Services and Housing Bureau plan to increase inspections. Renters deserve a safe, well-maintained place to live.