

FAQ

Rental Property Data

When did the City start asking for rental property data on the business license renewal form for rental activity?

The license application and renewal form has historically asked for dwelling type, number of units and rental income that helped determine the appropriate license fee for a property owner. In June of 2024 the questions were expanded on new license applications to include:

- type of property for all residential properties
- number of bedrooms and square footage for single family homes
- unit information and rent ranges for multi-family properties

The 2025 license renewal forms will include the expanded questions as well.

Why is the City asking for rental property data on the license application and renewal forms?

The City is working to expand its knowledge of rental property data in Tacoma to help inform housing policies and the implementation of community services to address the housing needs in Tacoma. One of the identified avenues to collect the data was through the City's licensing process. Although the license applications have historically asked for some rental property data, the City has not had a mechanism to store the data. In June 2024 a project was completed that established a program that allows the data to be captured through the licensing process with the ability to report out the information.

What authorizes the City to ask for rental property information on the license application and renewal forms?

Tacoma Municipal Code 6B.10.050.D requires any person that is renting property in the City to certify that each dwelling unit does not present conditions that endanger or impair the health and safety of the tenants and to provide rental property information as determined by the City.

What if I prefer to not provide the data the City is requesting?

The information being requested will help the City make better informed decisions on housing policies, community services and address housing needs. By not providing the information the City's rental property data will be incomplete.

Who approved the specific questions that are now asked on the application and renewal forms?

The recent additions to the application and renewal form were reviewed and approved by representatives from Tax & License, Community Economic Development (Landlord-Tenant Program), and the Office of Strategy (Affordable Housing Action Strategy).

What is the rationale behind including these questions as part of the renewal process, and how are they intended to assist in the City's oversight or regulation of rental properties?

The City does not regulate rental properties. The business license is a general requirement for all business activities within the City, including rental activities. The questions on the initial application and renewal form are intended to help inform City departments and City Council by providing valuable data for decision-making and strategic planning. For instance, the rent ranges and number of units will help the City understand the units available at various costs. The data on square footage and number of bedrooms will help the City understand if the housing market is meeting the needs of Tacoma's families that might need larger units and generally help the City better understand subsidized and unsubsidized affordable housing.

Where does the City obtain data about subsidized and unsubsidized properties?

For unsubsidized properties, data is collected through the annual business license renewal and permit applications when properties are developed or remodeled. For subsidized properties, it depends on the type of subsidy. For example, properties receiving a tax exemption through the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) program must submit annual paperwork to maintain the tax deduction. Affordable developments that receive City funding must report annually through a separate system tied to the City's allocation process.

Why is the City monitoring existing subsidized and unsubsidized properties?

The City monitors subsidized properties to ensure continued compliance with the terms of the subsidy. Monitoring unsubsidized rental properties helps the City understand the local rental market, including details like the number of bedrooms, rent ranges, and square footage. This data allows the City to identify unmet needs in the housing market and to provide assistance where necessary. Additionally, keeping up-to-date contact information for property managers is essential for communication.

Is rental property data a public record?

Yes. All documents submitted to the City are a public record and can be disclosed upon request unless there is a specific local or state law that prohibits the information from being disclosed. There is no law prohibiting license information from being released to the public therefore, licensing information, which includes rental property data asked for on the license application and renewal form, is considered a public record.

Is the data be available for the public to view on the City's website?

Yes. The City has two data sets related to rental property data available for view by the public on [Tacoma Open Data](#).

1. Business Licenses for Rental Activity - provides information for tenants and the public to verify a rental property owner is licensed. The information includes:

- Property address
- Property owner
- Owner mailing address
- Owner site address
- Status of the current year City of Tacoma business license

2. Rental Property Detail Report provides information for licensed rental property owners to verify their rental data currently on file with the City and will be available to view by November 30, 2024. The information includes:

- Property address
- Property owner
- Monthly rent for single family properties
- Monthly rent range and unit type for multi-family units

What additional questions are included on the business license application or renewal form that provides information to other City departments?

Other examples of questions on the City's license application and renewal forms that help inform other departments include questions regarding wastewater discharge for Environmental Services and business owner demographics for Community Economic Development.

The license application also includes questions regarding specific activities such as home occupations, garage repair and entertainment venues that help inform other City departments of locations that may need additional review and oversight to operate safely in the Tacoma.