



CITY OF COVINA

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Public Works Department
Code Enforcement Section

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Rental Housing Inspection Program – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)

Q: Why was the Rental Inspection Program created?

A: The program was approved in November 2012 by the Covina City Council after several public meetings and a public study session. The intent of the program is to proactively identify and inspect blighted and deteriorated housing stock that negatively affects property values and introduces public health and safety challenges to the community. The program will also inspect single family properties that are at a risk of neglect due to corporate or non-owner occupied status. The program is intended to: maintain community property values, identify vacant properties that may become targets for illegal activity, and ensure rehabilitation and prevention of rental housing that does not meet applicable building and housing codes, City Municipal Code standards, or is not safe to occupy.

Q: What are the fees for the program and why are they necessary?

A: As a result of community input in 2010 and 2011, an analysis of Code Enforcement inspection data was completed and showed that residential property inspections increased almost fourfold from 2008 to 2011. Community requests focused on improved multi-family property rental standards, property owner accountability for the deterioration of corporate owned foreclosures and an increased focus on problems with rentals of non-owner occupied single family homes. Research also noted a drastic increase in staff response to foreclosed multi-family residential properties and single family non-owner occupied rental properties that suffered from neglect during the economic crises.

The rental inspection fees are used to compensate for the cost of staff labor and materials related to the inspection of properties. The fee revenue from this program is placed in a separate account and used to recover the cost of the rental inspection program. The fees for the program can be calculated by using the matrix below. As examples: a single family property that was non-owner occupied and rented for income would have a yearly inspection fee of **\$126** (\$85 + \$41); and a five unit property would have a yearly inspection fee of **\$162** [\$85 + \$41 + (\$18 X 2)]. Please note that the first three units are not charged the per-unit fee, they are included with the base fee. This inspection fee is unrelated to the City business license tax required of rental properties with 4 or more units. Single family properties and multi-unit properties with less than four units are not required to pay the City business license tax, only this rental inspection fee.

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RENTAL HOUSING INSPECTION FEES			
HOUSING TYPE	Processing Fee	Base Fee	Per Unit Fee
Single Family	\$85.00	\$41.00	N/A
Condo/Townhome	\$85.00	\$41.00	N/A
Duplex	\$85.00	\$41.00	N/A
Triplex	\$85.00	\$41.00	N/A
4 units & over	\$85.00	\$41.00	\$18.00
Boarding House	\$85.00	\$41.00	\$18.00
Hotel	\$85.00	\$41.00	\$18.00
Motel	\$85.00	\$41.00	\$18.00

Q: I rent a room in my home / I rent a condo or home to a family member / I own a home that my elderly parents live in rent-free, why is this program targeting me?

A: This program is targeted towards non-owner occupied properties that are rented as a business endeavor. You have received notice regarding enrollment in the rental inspection program if you own residential or multi-family property in the City of Covina that was not identified as your primary residence with the Internal Revenue Service or if your property has been advertised as an available rental to the general public. **You may request an application for an exemption from the rental inspection program if you are not using the property as a business endeavor to earn rental income.** Non-profit organizations, corporations, and properties controlled by an association are not automatically exempt from the City's rental inspection program. Condominium owners that rent their units may be exempted from the inspection program if their association provides a letter of support to the City. Any property that is advertised for rental to the general public will lose its exemption status and be subject to the program and its fees. If you believe that you may qualify for an exemption from this program, please call the City's Code Enforcement main line at (626) 384-5470 to request an application for exemption or visit the Code Enforcement section of the City of Covina's website at www.covinaca.gov to download a PDF that you can complete and submit.

Q: What am I required to do as a property owner for my rental?

A: Besides assuring that your property is in compliance with Federal, state, county and local codes you must register your rental property with the Code Enforcement Section by submitting the following to the City of Covina: a completed "Rental Property Registration Application" and payment of applicable fees.

Q: What type of Codes does the Rental Inspection Program Enforce?

A: All housing in California is mandated to abide by the State Housing Code, also known as the California Health and Safety Code. This code established minimum standards for both owner and renter occupied housing units. Additionally, the City of Covina, like most other jurisdictions, also enforces other Federal, state, county and local code adopted by the Municipality which pertains to housing. Some of these Codes include: the City of Covina Municipal Code, the City of Covina Zoning Code, the California Building Code, the California Mechanical Code, the California Plumbing Code, and the California Fire Code.

Q: How / when will you inspect my property?

A: All properties will receive at least one annual exterior envelope and landscape inspection from a Code Enforcement Officer from the public right-of-way during the year. If no violations are noted on this initial cursory review, the property owner and/or property manager will be notified of the inspection date and that no violations were noted. If the exterior envelope and landscape inspection notes violations that are visible from the public right-of-way, the property owner and/or property manager will be contacted by a Code Enforcement Officer to schedule an on-site secondary inspection of the property grounds and the interior of one or more units. Due process protections are followed in the performance of inspections and owners should note that tenants must provide consent for inspections in the absence of a court order.

If a complaint is received regarding your property or a tenant reports substandard conditions at your property outside of the rental inspection process, owners will be notified and normal inspection procedures will occur.

Q: What types of problems are reportable at a property?

A: State and local codes pertaining to housing cover a variety of substandard issues; from lack of power or water to deteriorating landscaping, storage of debris or refuse, deteriorating landscaping and lack of general maintenance. If you do call Code Enforcement at (626) 384-5470 to report a violation at a property, please note that we appreciate your concern and welcome your input, however tenants and property owners are entitled to privacy on open cases and staff will not discuss the particulars of an open case with anyone but the owner/manager of a property or update complainants on progress once a complaint is received. Examples of the most common code enforcement issues are noted below:

- Exterior Site Conditions (such as non-maintained landscaping, junk and rubbish, etc.)
- Health and Safety Risk (green pool, utility bypass, pest infestation, etc.)
- Substandard Building Exterior (such as damaged siding, windows, lighting, roofing or railings)
- Non-maintained Plumbing (such as leaks, non-permitted work, non-functioning toilets, etc.)
- Substandard Electrical (damaged breakers or wiring, no electricity, etc.)
- Substandard Unit Interiors (such as deteriorating flooring, counters, fixtures, water intrusion, etc.)

Q: Can my landlord retaliate if I report substandard conditions?

A: No. Under California Civil Code, Protection from Retaliatory Conduct [CA Civil Code § 1942.5] infers that the property owner(s) has a retaliatory motive if the property owner(s) seeks to evict the tenant or raise rents within six months after the tenant has exercised their tenant rights by notifying a public agency or having a public agency inspect a rental unit.

If an alleged violation does not pose an immediate health or safety threat, tenants should report the issue to management and allow management a reasonable amount of time to resolve the problem before contacting Code Enforcement. If management does not resolve the problem in a reasonable time or if the problem is an immediate health or safety threat that cannot wait, contact the Code Enforcement Section at (626) 384-5470. The primary directive of Code Enforcement is to gain compliance with the law, not to issue citations or intervene in landlord/tenant disputes. Most property owners comply with Code Enforcement requests in a reasonable amount of time and do not progress into the administrative citation process.