A Policy Proposal to Protect Denver Renters and Keep Their Homes Safe

Sponsored by Denver City Council Members
Darrell B. Watson (D-9) and Shontel M. Lewis (D-8)





The Story: Denver Renters Left Out In the Cold

- In the cold of winter, a burst water pipe at Welton Park Apartments left residents without running water for over a week.
- Residents were forced to use portable toilets in a cold alley and fill water from a dirty hose to cook meals. They were not offered assistance.
- This policy will protect renters from future incidents by allowing DDPHE to order landlords to provide relocation assistance to tenants when a building is deemed uninhabitable.

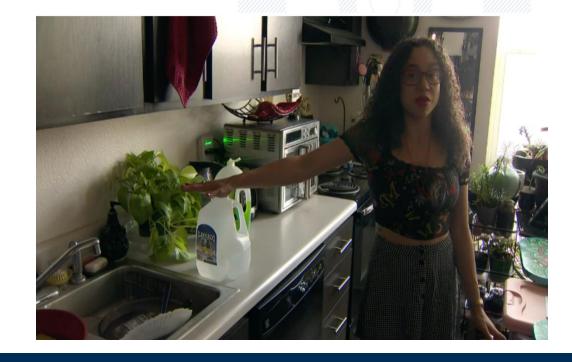




by Greystar.

Five Points apartment building without water for 6 days

Community leaders issued demands that include a public apology and prorated rent to tenants at Welton Park Apartments, which is managed





Complying with SB24-094 and Colorado's New

State Habitability Laws

 Colorado's updated Warranty of Habitability code requires safe, sanitary conditions for rented homes, dwelling units, and apartments.

• State law (SB24-094) requires landlords to ensure that homes are fit for human habitation and do not interfere with tenants' life, health, or safety.

• If life, health, or safety are at risk, then state law requires landlords to provide relocation assistance, provided the tenant did not cause the habitability issue.



Colorado's State Habitability Standards

Mold

The state's list of unsafe and unhabitable conditions includes:

Unsafe floors, stairways, or railings

Poor electrical wiring or lighting

Bug, pest, or rodent infestations

Broken windows, doors, or locks

Issues with sewage disposal

No hot or cold running water

Failure to meet building or health codes

Dirty common areas or garbage buildup

Gas or plumbing problems

Leaking roofs or walls

 Lack of heat in dangerous and cold conditions





The Problem:

Non-compliant landlords simply ignore the fines and wait for the courts to act or force collections.







The Problem: Gaps in Denver's **Municipal Code Leave Denver** Renters in the **Cold and Without Relocation Help**

- DDPHE has the power to placard a building when it is uninhabitable, forcing residents to vacate until the issue is fixed.
- The placard is a notice of an uninhabitable condition to the landlord, triggering state law thresholds.
- DDPHE does not currently have the power to order relocation assistance, meaning the tenant must exercise that right under state law.
- This creates a situation in which DDPHE could unwittingly create displacement or avoid placarding a building to prevent displacement.

The Solution: Give DDPHE the Resources to Enforce State and Local Laws to Protect Renters

- 1. Increase DDPHE Oversight: The proposal strengthens DDPHE's authority to enforce habitability standards at apartments and other rental units.
- 2. Mandate Relocation Assistance for Tenants: The policy would require landlords to provide relocation assistance when their building fails to meet state or local housing habitability standards.
- 3. Enforce Consequences of Non-Compliance:
 Authorizes the City to place liens to recoup costs
 when the City covers relocation assistance.





Draft Policy Proposal

Sec. 27-26: Inspections

DDPHE can request property management records as part of the inspection.

Sec. 27-27: Enforcement & Penalties

 DDPHE can issue fines and order landlords to fix habitability problems until they are corrected.

Sec. 27-28: Designation of Unfit Dwellings

- DDPHE may order reasonable accommodations in the event of an uninhabitable condition and may order without placarding if placarding leads to displacement.
- If the City covers the costs of accommodation instead of a non-compliant landlord, it may place a lien in the amount of the cost of the accommodation plus 5.0%.





Timeline and Stakeholder Meetings

Jan. / Feb. 2025: Stakeholder Meetings with Tenant Advocacy Groups, like East Colfax Community Collective, Denver Metro Tenants Union, GES Coalition, and others

Feb. / March 2025: Stakeholder Meetings with the Apartment Association, Denver Metro Association of Realtors, and other Landlords

Feb. 24, 2025: Presentation to the Budget and Policy Committee

March 7, 2025: Industry Roundtable and Stakeholder Meeting

April 9, 2025: Presentation to the Safety Committee

April/May 2025: First and Second Reading at City Council



Questions and Discussion



