

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



Sponsored by Denver City Council Members

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# 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.



# 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

**The state's list of unsafe and uninhabitable 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
- Mold
- 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

