

Rental Licensing

Tonight you will be discussing rental licenses and rental inspections for Longmont landlords. Both licensing and inspections are critical for the health and safety of Longmont residents and also for the city's and residents' use in future planning. Without this critical public database it is impossible to know the scope of the housing crisis or adequately address it.

I urge you to move forward tonight to direct staff to create an ordinance for rental licensing, which is a fairly simple issue. We license and inspect all restaurants in the city because people spend time and consume food and beverages in an establishment, and they have a right to not have their health and safety at risk from fires, building collapse, contamination, etc. Residents of Longmont spend even more time living in their homes, be they rental or owned. They also have a right to live in a home in which they and their children do not have their health and safety at daily risk.

Inspections are essential but require more detailed and thoughtful discussion. Colorado has one of the least regulated housing industries in the country, and also one of the highest prices for rentals and homes for sale. Although speculators and landlords currently reap a handsome profit from their business, they extract profit from their tenants yet are mostly unregulated. It has been said that the city receives only about 60 complaints per year from tenants. That is because tenants know they will be evicted if they complain. More frequently, their rent is raised and they are quietly forced out. While Colorado now has a Warrant of Habitability, there is no way to enforce this, and once again it is between tenant and landlord. Inspections would take it out of the hands of tenants vs. landlords and give the city the responsibility for inspections, just as with all new construction certificates of occupancy. There need to be inspections every three years for any unit or building over 8 years old.

Single family detached homes need to be included in inspections as they have, in my experience, worse maintenance and more problems. They also tend to have more people per unit (families) with small children who are even more vulnerable to hazards.

I urge you to create a rental licensing ordinance.