

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Seattle's Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance

Updated February 5, 2026

What is the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance?

This is an ordinance enacted by the Seattle City Council on June 25, 1990, which provides benefits for residential tenants who will be displaced by housing demolition, substantial rehabilitation or alteration, change of use or removal of rent or income restrictions. Benefits include payment of relocation assistance to low income tenants and advance notice of the planned development.

Who is affected?

The ordinance affects owners of residential property occupied by a tenant if that tenant will have to move because of any of the actions listed above. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) cannot issue any permits for housing demolition, change of use or substantial rehabilitation unless the requirements of the ordinance are met.

What is required?

Owners of property slated for redevelopment or rehabilitation must obtain a Tenant Relocation License from SDCI before any master use, demolition, or building permit will be issued. Application for a license is required at the same time as application for project permits.

Who is eligible for relocation assistance?

Tenants are eligible for relocation assistance payments of \$5,354.00 if they qualify as low income, defined as having a family income of no more than 50 percent of the King County median income. The property owner is responsible for paying half of the relocation assistance, \$2,677.00; the City pays the other half.

How long does it take to get a license?

It usually takes six to nine months to obtain a license. The owner must provide tenants with program information and notice of the project. Tenants have 30 days to apply for relocation assistance. After SDCI evaluates eligibility, the owner must issue a 90-day Notice of Development to all tenants. The 90 day notice must expire before a Tenant Relocation License can be issued, regardless of whether tenants are eligible for relocation assistance payments. Program forms are provided by the City and there are specific procedures which must be followed; these are explained in the license application materials.

How to apply for a relocation license.

If you need to begin the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO) process or request an appointment, please complete the [TRAO Application](#). If you have any questions about TRAO or the tenant relocation hold on your permit, please [submit a request](#) using our online form. You will be required to provide the property legal description, SDCI project number, and a list of tenants' names and telephone numbers/email addresses.

REMEMBER: NO permit can be issued by SDCI if the work will displace tenants UNLESS a Tenant Relocation License has been obtained. To avoid delays in your project, find out if you need a license and apply right away if you do.

Fees

SDCI charges a fee to process a Tenant Relocation Assistance license. The fee is based on the number of displaced households. This fee is charged to the developer or property owner and is separate from the owner's share of relocation assistance paid to eligible tenants. SDCI establishes permit fees by the Seattle [Permit Fee Subtitle](#).

Can a rent increase be used to displace tenants?

It is a violation of the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance to increase a tenant's rent for the purpose of avoiding applying for a Tenant Relocation License.



Tenant Relocation License

Eligibility Income Thresholds

Household Size	50% of AMI*
1 Person	\$55,000
2 People	\$62,850
3 People	\$70,700
4 People	\$78,550
5 People	\$84,850
6 People	\$91,150
7 People	\$97,450
8 People	\$103,700

* 50% Area Median Income

Removal of rent or income restriction OR Application to SDCI for rental housing

- Demolition
- Change of use
- Rehabilitation

