



## City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

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October 9, 2025

### Seattle Renters' Commission Stance on 2026 Budget Proposal

Late last month, the mayor unveiled his \$8.9 billion 2026 budget for the City of Seattle. The Seattle Renters' Commission (SRC) would like to express its thanks for the administration's attention to key issues, such as maintaining funding levels for the Mobile Integrated Health program and Post Overdose Team.

However, the SRC calls for key amendments to the proposed budget. As you know, Seattle is a [majority-renter city](#). Low-barrier access to affordable housing for cost-burdened renters must be the priority of the budget, especially as the Trump Administration guts investments in community wellbeing at a time of great economic uncertainty.

#### Protect Dedicated Affordable Housing Revenue

We strongly oppose the continuing practice of **diverting Jumpstart funds to plug holes in the general fund deficit**. This is a practice that sets a concerning precedent that must be taken seriously by the public. **Jumpstart funds are dedicated to one sole purpose: equitable development of affordable housing**. The proposed budget allocates only **\$143 million** to affordable housing related services, despite Jumpstart generating approximately **\$388 million**.

We urge the Council to stop relying on Jumpstart as a rainy day fund, given the strong public disagreement. The most responsible option moving forward is to urgently pursue progressive revenue. Please listen to the people and end this practice of taking funds away from families who are actively priced out of Seattle.

#### Fully Fund Rental Assistance and Essential Tenant Services

We urge the City to fully fund Rental Assistance and Tenant Services to the levels maintained two years ago. Nearly half of Seattle's residents are renters, many struggling to stay housed amid an escalating affordability crisis and ongoing economic uncertainty.

**Housing stability is public safety**. When renters have access to support and legal protections, our entire city benefits. Stable housing prevents displacement, reduces homelessness, and strengthens neighborhoods. Investing in tenant services is not only compassionate, it's fiscally responsible and essential to a safe, equitable Seattle.

The proposed budget cuts would have serious consequences. Without adequate funding, organizations will lose the ability to provide legal aid, prevent unfair evictions, educate renters, and mediate conflicts. **The cost of these programs pales in comparison to the enormous social and financial toll of homelessness.**



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Nearly half of Seattle-area renters are rent-burdened, and **unpaid rent is the leading cause of eviction statewide**. Tenant services are a proven solution: they help families stay housed, support landlords, and reduce pressure on emergency systems.

It is far more humane -- and cost effective -- to keep people in their homes rather than wait until they have already lost housing. Fully funding both rental assistance and tenant services is an urgent step toward a just, stable, and thriving Seattle.

### **Restore Tenant Advocacy Funding**

We urge you to reinstate the **\$50,000** allocated for establishing a Tenant Work Group. This work group was intended to draft legislation to create an Office of Rental Housing Standards, moving beyond voluntary compliance to provide real tenant justice. Although funds were allotted in the City's budget to establish this work group in 2024, the funds were [withheld](#) without explanation, and we ask that they be reinstated.

### **Decrease Funding for Programs that Harm Renters**

We urge the Council to cut funding for programs that harm renters, especially mass surveillance. **This disproportionately targets renters, especially renters of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ residents, people with disabilities, and low-income households.** SPD places cameras near apartments and accesses live video for the Real-Time Crime Center without renter consent. [Multiple studies have shown](#) that mass surveillance does not reduce violent crime, but it does consistently harm communities, especially in a time where mass surveillance is being used to target and illegally imprison and deport people of color and immigrants.

Additionally, general investments in SPD should receive further scrutiny. The Seattle Police Officers Guild continues to protect officers who erode public trust. SRC believes the Community Assisted Response and Engagement (CARE) department is a better alternative for investment in public safety. The mayor's proposed budget writes: "[The CARE] department has continued working to establish itself as an independent city department." **If you are considering allocation of additional resources for SPD, please direct them to CARE instead.**

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the City Council to consider and incorporate our suggestions to build a more equitable and stable Seattle for all.

Sincerely,  
The Seattle Renters' Commission

### **Seattle Renter's Commission**

Website: <https://seattle.gov/seattle-renters-commission>

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